F.H. Jacobi's "On Divine Things and their Revelation."

A Study and Translation.

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Abstract

English Version

This dissertation presents the first English translation, together with commentary, of F.H. Jacobi´s *On Divine Things and their Revelation* (1811; henceforth, *Divine Things*). This work marked for Jacobi the emancipation of rational thinking from the bounds set to it by the Enlightenment in matters of religion. Jacobi's goal was to develop a new definition of rationality. And this is a goal that he sought to achieve indirectly by drawing from different but consonant sources. The intention of this dissertation is twofold: to examine Jacobi's efforts at introducing a new form of rationality; to make explicit the limits of this rationality inasmuch as Jacobi succeeded in defining it.

In general, my analysis shows that, while Jacobi relies heavily on Kant's doctrine of postulates to lay out his position, his considered concept of rationality seeks to distance itself from the Kantian transcendental mode of thinking – indeed, to distance itself from the entire tradition of modern philosophy. Nevertheless, since Jacobi still operates within the frameworks of thought typical of the Enlightenment, despite his opposition to it, his thought is ultimately continuous with it.

More specifically, I demonstrate that reason for Jacobi is properly defined, not by the act of postulating, but the act of perceiving things which are truly external to the perceiving of them. This perceiving, whether reason- or sense-based, is intuitive. Jacobi recognizes, of course, that the perceiving itself, and even more so the system of conceptual representations based on it, is a subjective product. It is the undue interest in this subjective aspect of cognition that obscures the objective apprehension of reality that reason (as redefined by Jacobi) otherwise houses, and thus gives rise to at times useful, but always illusory, representations of reality. Jacobi's *Divine Things* is the manifesto of a new realism. This is a realism, however, that in order to be true to itself requires according to Jacobi the assent to *divine things.* Where for Kant rational theology can be only the

product of subjective postulation, for Jacobi it is rather where realism is rather achieved. In this, while countering Kant, Jacobi still operates within the terms of a problematic as set by him.

French Version

Cette thèse présente la première traduction anglaise de F.H. Jacobi's *On Divine Things and their Revelation* (1811 ; dorénavant, *Divine Things*) avec commentaire. Cet ouvrage marque pour Jacobi l'émancipation de la pensée rationnelle à partir des limites fixées par les Lumières en matière de religion. L'objectif de Jacobi était de développer une nouvelle définition de la rationalité. Et c'est un objectif qu'il a cherché à atteindre indirectement en puisant dans des sources différentes mais en accord. L'intention de cette thèse est double : examiner les efforts de Jacobi pour introduire une nouvelle forme de rationalité ; expliciter les limites de cette rationalité dans la mesure où Jacobi a réussi à la définir.

En général, mon analyse montre que, même si Jacobi s'appuie beaucoup sur la doctrine des postulats de Kant pour exposer sa position, son concept de rationalité cherche à s'éloigner du mode de pensée transcendantal Kantien - en effet, à s'éloigner de toute la tradition de philosophie moderne. Néanmoins, étant donné que Jacobi opère toujours dans les cadres de pensée typiques des Lumières ; malgré son opposition, sa pensée est finalement cohérente avec lui.

Plus précisément, je démontre que la raison de Jacobi est correctement définie, non pas par l'acte de postuler, mais par l'acte de percevoir des choses qui sont réellement extérieures à leur perception. Cette perception, qu'elle soit fondée sur la raison ou sur le sens, est intuitive. Jacobi reconnaît, bien sûr, que la perception elle-même, et plus encore le système de représentations conceptuelles qui en découle, est un produit subjectif. C'est l'intérêt indu de cet aspect subjectif de la connaissance qui masque l'appréhension objective de la réalité que la raison (redéfinie par Jacobi) accueille par

ailleurs et donne ainsi lieu à des représentations de la réalité parfois utiles, mais toujours illusoires. Les choses divines de Jacobi est le manifeste d'un nouveau réalisme. C'est un réalisme, cependant, que pour être fidèle à lui-même nécessite, selon Jacobi, l'assentiment aux choses divines. Là où, pour Kant, la théologie rationnelle ne peut être que le produit d'une postulation subjective, pour Jacobi, c'est là que le réalisme est plutôt atteint. En cela, tout en combattant Kant, Jacobi fonctionne toujours selon les termes de la problématique qu'il a définie.

Acknowledgments

This dissertation has been a challenge in many respects: it includes a translation from a language that is not my own into a language that I did not master as I arrived in Montreal 5 years ago; it is about concepts such as *faith*, *immediacy* and *feeling* that are in many ways foreign to the theoretical precision that I have always attributed to philosophy; it has been chosen as a project about an author and a text that are somehow at odds with what I believed pure rational thinking meant.

I want to thank Prof. George di Giovanni. He believed that there was some good in doing research on Jacobi´s *On Divine Things and their Revelation*. Thanks to him, I have been introduced to Jacobi's philosophy; I discovered the intrinsic potential of the analysis of the notion of immediacy which appears to have no citizenship in the land of speculation that philosophy occupies. Moreover, my intellectual background may be deemed a purely theoretical approach to the problems of philosophy, and thanks to Prof. di Giovanni's writing and teaching I slowly discovered that within the confrontation immediacy-VS-mediation lies the ultimate horizon of philosophy of religion, where both ethical and theoretical inquiries gather around shared notions such as: truth, ultimate reality, Being, existence, and subject.

I want to thank Prof. Garth W. Green. His teaching is the reason why I will continue to walk the thin line that philosophy of religion constitutes. As Jacobi would state, philosophy of religion has to do with the limits of rational explanations; it deals with the limits of our language. Garth Green made me realize how the field of philosophy of religion is quintessentially rational for it constitutes the analysis of the confrontation between what is conceptually assumed but, at the same time, cannot be known. In the end, philosophy of religion appears as the *logos* about how we relate to a principle.

I am also grateful to the PRIS (Philosophy of Religious Informal Seminar) colleagues: Hadi Fakhoury, Matthew Nini, Jason Blakeburn, Jingjing Li, Naznin Patel, and Marco Dozzi. The

community we created was established to contextualize, discuss, and communicate our research in a shared field. Thanks to this, I was able to appreciate the limits of this present research.

Contribution to knowledge

The author of this dissertation is the first to have translated Jacobi's *On Divine Things and their Revelation* into English, and the first in the English-speaking world to have dedicated a book-length study to it. He will defend a thesis that, though foreshadowed by some scholars (namely: George di Giovanni, Birgit Sandkaulen and Marco Ivaldo) is the result of a new understanding of what *finitude* means in the context of Jacobi's philosophy of religion.

The equation of reason and virtue (Marco Ivaldo) and the conception of existence according to the blueprint provided by the notion of cause (Birgit Sandkaulen), have contributed to the theoretical background of the author's investigations about potential and limits of Jacobi's understanding of rational thinking in the context of German Idealism. As they have been presented by George di Giovanni since 1994, the potential and limits of Jacobi's understanding of rational thinking can be appreciated only when confronted with the limits that Jacobi's polemical target (systematic thinking) shows. Otherwise, Jacobi's works would look like unsound ideology written in the most baroque manner. Instead, Jacobi's efforts shed light on internal frictions and flaws of systematic thinking while highlighting the whole panorama of rational issues that falls outside that systematic approach. First among these issues is the question about *finite existence*.

On the basis of a critical analysis of the methodological weaknesses of Jacobi's philosophy (as highlighted by George di Giovanni), we may appreciate the intentions and the general project that moved Jacobi's ungifted pen. We first need to admit that the weight Jacobi puts on the *immediacy* of finite existence is intrinsically (and strategically) defective: "we cannot say *that* something exists unless we have identified it *as* something capable of existence and recognizable as

such. “That something exists” adds indeed a determination to a subject of predication, namely, as Hegel points out, that it is fully determined *as being* and therefore recognizable as *there*. Existence does not come all at once: it is in becoming. The modal categories are objective precisely because they determine how, and the extent to which, something exists. On the basis of his position, Jacobi should have recognized as much, without having to get himself embroiled in dubious arguments about the primacy of existence. All categorial determination is about modes of existence."[1]

Keeping this problem in mind, I will try to show how Jacobi's remarks published in the *Divine Things* aim to reveal the mode of existence of human beings, whose *finitude* is the benchmark of existence in general, and whose traits—I will try to explain—partially distance themselves from those problems of immediacy so adequately summarized by di Giovanni. Although that problematic notion of immediacy plays a fundamental role in defining finite existence in Jacobi's philosophy, we will try to show that the *Divine Things* approaches differently the definition of finite existence.

According to the *Divine Things*, existence is not only a predicate or a quality of things; it is defined according to the two *activities* that primarily identify finite subjects: being a free cause and being rational. In general, subjects define themselves as the paradigm of what exists.

On the one hand, existence results from the activity that a singularity needs to perform in order to claim its autonomy in bringing about a causal relation with its other. By defining true existence, Jacobi shows how it is possible to maintain and resolve the tension between absolute relatedness and absolute singularity. Thanks to this tension, Jacobi eventually reveals where truth lies: truth is neither the system that claims absolute relativity, nor the system that claims absolute self-sufficiency of its determinations.

On the other hand, existence is reason itself, which is the virtue that humans may—or may not—perform. Reason consists essentially in finding the true form of human's faith in a creator

[1] George di Giovanni, a private conversation.

God. Only by recognizing that form is nihilism avoided, and existence established according to a divine cosmic order.

This dissertation will try to make explicit that existence and rationality are thus determined according to the same paradigm; the tension between relatedness and absolute self-sufficiency. Jacobi's last book *On Divine Things and their Revelation* will therefore be interpreted as a contribution to a thinking that needs to bridge two antagonistic epistemic theories.

F.H. Jacobi and the *Divine Things*

Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743-1819) was a peculiar literary figure and one of the most influential German intellectuals of the second half of the 18th-century. As a seminal polemicist, Jacobi was a vocal critic of German late Enlightenment, Kant's Transcendental Idealism, Fichte's Doctrine of Knowledge, and eventually of Schelling's early philosophy. Had he lived longer, he would certainly have tackled Hegel's system of philosophy with the acute insight he so often proved to possess. Unfortunately, although the mature Hegel himself recognized the strength of Jacobi's intuitions and discussed his theses in the introductory paragraphs of his *Encyclopaedia* (1830) alongside Aristotle's, Kant's, and Descartes's, this last battle did not occur.[2]

Although he started the main philosophical controversies of his age, Jacobi was definitely not interested in polemic per se. On the contrary, he was an affectionate friend and perceptive companion. He was either acquainted or in contact with: Kant, Fichte, Reinhold, Goethe, Klopstock, Friedrich Schlegel, Wieland, Mendelssohn, Lavater, Hemsterhuis, Lessing, Matthias Claudius, Schelling, Hamann, Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt, Schiller, Madame de Stael, and Herder, to name only a few. Mirroring his cultural fervor, this network also shows the wide range of debates that he was able to engage and even promote. A good survey of 18th and 19th-century philosophy cannot but mention the influence Jacobi had on major German philosophers, considering that Jacobi started (or defined) the main philosophical controversies of his age: the Pantheism Controversy (*Pantheismusstreit*, 1785), the Atheism Controversy (*Atheismusstreit*, 1788-1789), and the Theism Controversy (*Theismusstreit*, 1801-1812). Somehow, this stream of disputes

[2] Hegel's interpretation of Jacobi's thought evolved throughout the years: from the negative critique published in *Faith and Knowledge* to the subtle analysis that appears in the *Encyclopaedia* 1830 (§§ 61-78). Many are the places where Hegel addresses himself to Jacobi's philosophy. A study of this evolution has not been published yet, though it would shed light on both while revealing the evolution of Hegel's notion of subjectivity. George di Giovanni made me aware of a Jacobi's letter where he claims: "He [Hegel] may well be right, and I would dearly love to undertake with him, once more, a thorough research into what the power of thought can yield itself, were not the head of the old man too weak for the job." Letter to Johann Neeb, 30 May 1847. *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi's auslesener Briefwechsel*, ed. Friedrich Roth, Vol II, #300 (Leipzig1825-27), 467-468.

derived from his bringing Spinoza back to the main stage of philosophical debates while showing that even the Kantian emancipation of subjectivity had fallen victim to sheer pantheism. In Jacobi's eyes, the transcendental system of reason was both the cradle of moral oppression and ultimate assault on a personal God. As a passionate champion of a liberal individuum, Jacobi claimed that the negation of personal singularity was grounded on a theory of an "I" deprived of all substance and existence. In his view, the history of modern thinking had obliterated the true "I," true reality, and the true God in the name of an enthusiasm for explanations. So, in the midst of a rich philosophical season, Jacobi courageously denounced how philosophy had led to a total annihilation of the true for the sake of a dangerous illusion.

What follows is a study of the last book that Jacobi published, entitled *On Divine Things and their Revelation* (henceforth, *Divine Things*), which presents Jacobi's final words against the illusion of philosophy and in favor of a liberation derived from his doctrine of existence.[3] In the first part of this Introduction and in some sections of the following Chapters, we will be giving details of the historiographical background of this publication only to provide concrete support to the philosophical analysis of revolutionary ideas that Jacobi elaborates in this last and attentively pondered work. We will see that the *Divine Things* is thematically rooted in one of his most famous works, the *Letter to Fichte* (1799), though topics and arguments are elaborated in perfect consonance with Jacobi's previous philosophical treatises, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (1785) and *David Hume über den Glauben, oder Idealismus und Realismus. Ein Gespräch* (1787).[4] Historiographical details will give depth to the pages of the *Divine Things*—which gradually took shape over the span of a decade—but they also give us the opportunity to locate our analysis around a central axis. The *Divine Things* represents a privileged text for a study of Jacobi's philosophy because it coincides with a moment in which Jacobi himself

[3] F.H. Jacobi, *Von den göttlichen Dingen und Ihrer Offenbarung*, in F. H. Jacobi, *Werke, Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 3, ed. Walter Jaeschke (Hamburg/Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Meiner/frommann-holzboog, 2000), 1-136.
[4] Friedrich Henrich Jacobi, "Letter to Fichte," in Friedrich Henrich Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel* Allwill, ed. George di Giovanni (Montréal: McGill-Queen University Press, 1994), (henceforth: *Letter to Fichte*), 497-536.

starts to reflect upon his own lifelong enterprise. The *Divine Things* was composed as independent text while Jacobi was busy starting the project of the complete edition of his works. This final work bears traces of Jacobi's mature self-understanding that crystallizes around his strongest philosophical tenets: the dispute with transcendental philosophy, the critical esteem of Spinoza's thought, and his final battle against nihilism. Therefore, the polemic against the modern history of philosophy elaborated in the *Divine Things* presents the critical advantage of giving a self-conscious general perspective of Jacobi's philosophical achievements.

This distinct scope makes the present research valuable in defining Jacobi's general accomplishment. The *Divine Things* has not yet been taken into full consideration in the English-speaking world, it is still somehow overshadowed by more famous texts like the *Spinozabriefe*, the dialogue *David Hume*, and the *Letter to Fichte*. We will try to provide a detailed analysis of this work while drawing on those more influential milestones in Jacobi's oeuvre. This methodology will not only make the following analysis familiar to Anglophone readers of Jacobi, less accustomed to the later works, but it will also enhance the religious implications of those epistemological problems that Jacobi had tackled earlier in his life, and that made post-Kantian philosophy a complex constellation of theoretical, moral, and social issues.

One chapter (chapter 2) will be entirely dedicated to defining the relation between the *Letter to Fichte* and the *Divine Things*. It will also trace Jacobi's concern about the destiny of philosophy back to that collective reaction against the Enlightenment account of rational thinking that Early German Romantics presented through the works of Novalis, F.D.E. Schleiermacher, and Fr. Schlegel, to name only the most renowned members. As we will see, both the *Divine Things* and the *Letter to Fichte* affirm that systematic knowledge (perfectly exemplified by Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*) denies all room for the existence of both the individual being and a personal God.[5] On the basis of Jacobi's analysis of transcendental philosophy presented in the *Letter to*

[5] George di Giovanni, "Introduction: The Unfinished Philosophy of Friedrich Henrich Jacobi," in Friedrich Henrich Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel* Allwill, ed. George di Giovanni (Montréal: McGill-Queen University Press, 1994), 3-167 (pp. 67-116). See Birgit Sandkaulen, "Ichheit und Person. Zur Aporie der

Fichte, the epochal equation between philosophy and nihilism is introduced for the first time in history. That same equation will also provide the first account of a subject matter that is crucial to understand the philosophical focal point of the *Divine Things*.

The next chapter (chapter 3) will offer an analytical interpretation of the *Divine Things* per se. It will become clear that the foundation for the apprehension of the true, the beautiful, and the good lies in the proper way to think reality in general and human beings in particular. Always relying on his polemical liveliness, Jacobi gives identity and definition to his own philosophical ideas by tuning Plato's and Aristotle's teaching to the philosophical debates of his time. As a consequence, Jacobi's philosophical project grows out of the desire to give *noetic knowledge* and *moral virtue* an updated significance in light of the problems that define modern thinking. Jacobi religious vocabulary—so rich and ubiquitous in the *Divine Things*—does not aim to establish a lay church of philosophers but introduces a project that would surpass modern thinking on the basis of those evidences that make nihilism not only morally erroneous, but theoretically unsound as well. We will see that reason is not a faculty to organize reality in a consistent way, but a virtue that humans may—or may not—exercise to live and know according to a divine measure of reality. This virtue shows its absolute value only when its outcomes are compared with the infirm results of systematic modern thinking.

Yet modern thinking is not a dispensable incident in human history. As the *Divine Things* tries to show, the systematic thinking that modern philosophy advances is rooted in human nature and takes the form of a so-called "enthusiasm for explanation." Hence, reason is a *virtue* precisely because it opposes a different the human tendency, that of constructing ethical and epistemological systems. The effort to unearth the internal battle of human spirit (between the systematic

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Wissenschaftslehre in der Debatte zwischen Fichte und Jacobi," in *System und Systemkritik um 1800*, ed. Christian Danz and Jürgen Stolzenberg (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2011), 45-68, and Birgit Sandkaulen, "Daß, was oder wer. Jacobi im Diskurs über Personen," in *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi. Ein Wendepunkt der geistigen Bildung der Zeit*, ed. Walter Jaeschke and Birgit Sandkaulen (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2004), 217-237, and Birgit Sandkaulen, "System und Systemkritik. Überlegungen zur gegenwärtigen Bedeutung eines fundamentalen Problemzusammenhangs," in *System und Systemkritik. Beiträge zu einem Grundproblem der klassischen deutschen Philosophie*, ed. Birgit Sandkaulen (Würzburg: Königshausen u. Neumann, 2006), 11-34.

enthusiasm for explanations and the virtue of a reason conceived as "faculty of perception") so as to reveal the character of divine things, is responsible for the polemical shape that the *Divine Things* takes. That very battle is what gives the divine essence of humanity a concrete possibility as well, as it anchors the validity of "divine things" to the degree of that Jacobi is successful in a) enhancing the problems of modern thinking and b) providing a sound alternative thereto.

The last chapter (chapter 4) elaborates the distinct notion of existence that the *Divine Things* seems to introduce. The new concept of existence meets the need for a new metaphysical approach to human self-understanding. The alternative that Jacobi's proposes is a metaphysical discourse about the human world. The chapter will widen the scope of the present research connecting Jacobi's philosophical interest for Kant's pre-critical essays with topics analyzed in the *Divine Things*. It will be showed that existence equals finitude, and that finitude consists in the possibility of standing between divine order and earthly co-existence.

The notion of finitude, although not explicitly mentioned by Jacobi, provides the guiding idea for our understanding of Jacobi's final word on the nature of divinity. The finitude of human beings introduces the disclosure of a twofold relation of mankind: to God and to systematic co-existence. As will become clear, this capacity to be determined by worldly co-existence while being independent from it sets human beings free. Yet this freedom is not equal to complete disconnectedness; humans do not dwell in a place of pure identities uninfluenced by their others. On the contrary, humans are beings that can have *virtue*, which is precisely the ability to defy the logic of co-existence to become true *cause*. Virtue is thus an activity that gives human beings the capacity to be connected to the true order of things and to give shape and concrete reality to divine order. The systematic connection that would annihilate the very possibility of a real cause is what human virtue opposes. This freedom of human nature is not defined arbitrarily, it is rather the result of the creaturely nature of human beings. The freedom not to be determined by systematic co-existence, but to develop a different plane of reality results from the capacity to be conditioned by human creaturaly nature only. The status of being created by God and the faculty to perceive God's

creation in its order and proportions is sealed in the immediate relation I-Thou. This immediate relation provides the model that defines everything that is good, beautiful, and true; or, in other terms, that exists.

History of the Manuscript

Since its editorial conception, the *Divine Things* represented a special opportunity for Jacobi to put together different but consonant texts that he wrote during the first decade of the 19th century. As the outline of the German edition of the *Divine Things* signals, the final version resulted at the end of a long process of ripening and adjusting preexisting materials; a process that started as early as the *Letter to Fichte* (1799). The project of the *Divine Things*—as Jacobi himself admitted—shows a clear line of continuity that connects his last writings with the publication that earned him notoriety, *Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Herr Moses Mendelssohn* (1785) (henceforth *Spinoza Letters*).[6] This gives a preliminary idea of the magnitude of this final achievement which seems to embrace—at least in Jacobi's intentions—his life-long enterprise. Jacobi finally managed to publish the text in 1811 in the form that is today available in the critical edition.[7]

The *Divine Things* is divided in three main sections which include: A) Jacobi's preliminary account (dated Munich, October 5th, 1811) regarding the composition of the text;[8] B) the script *Ueber eine Weissagung Lichtenberg's* (henceforth *Prophecy*) that was originally published in the *Taschenbuch für das Jahr 1802*, edited by Jacobi's elder brother, J. Georg Jacobi, and published in

6 F.H. Jacobi, *Von den göttlichen Dingen und Ihrer Offenbarung* (Hamburg/Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Meiner/frommann-holzboog, 2000), p. 72: "Meine Ueberzeugungen sind noch ganz dieselben, die ich vor mehr als fünf und zwanzig Jahren in meinem Buche über die Lehre des Spinoza, und in dem bald darauf erschienenen Gespräch über Idealismus und Realismus dargelegt habe."
7 F.H. Jacobi, *Von den göttlichen Dingen*, 1-136. Two tentative titles were advanced *Über innere und äußere Offenbarung* and *Philosophie und Christenthum* before Jacobi opted for the definitive *Von den göttlichen Dingen und Ihrer Offenbarung* in late 1811. See W. Jaeschke, *Editorischer Bericht* in F. H. Jacobi, *Werke, Gesamtausgabe* (Hamburg/Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Felix Meiner Verlag/frommann-holzboog, 2000), 175-176.
8 Ibid., 3-6.

Hamburg by F. Perthes together with contributions by Jean Paul, F.G Klopstock, J.F. Köppen and others;[9] C) the actual opening of the work under the title *On Divine Things and Their Revelation*, which includes the review of the fourth volume of the complete works by Matthias Claudius, *Claudius-Rezension*,[10] along with the text that comprises nearly all the most important theoretical issues and accounts for the main part of the work.[11]

During the last years of the 18th century Jacobi was occupied in editing a manuscript that he had not yet considered ready for publication. The content of this text seemed to him profoundly connected with the ideas expounded in both his *Letter to Fichte* and a small pamphlet that will later form the *Prophecy*. Thus, he eventually decided to include parts of the *Letter to Fichte* and the entire *Prophecy* in the original layout of what would ultimately become the *Divine Things*.[12]

Furthermore, the first part of the third section of the *Divine Things*—which only appeared in 1811 as first part of the essay *On Divine Things and Their Revelation*—presents a long review of the complete works of the poet and writer Matthias Claudius, whose ideas, at least in their general implications, Jacobi felt very close to his own theoretical and moral concerns. This review, as Jacobi states in the Preface to the first edition of the volume, was originally conceived as an account

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9 Ibid., 7-31. In the second edition of the *Divine Things* Jacobi chose not to include his text on Lichtenberg's prophecy as Introduction to his work, but to slot it as independent piece before the *Divine Things* in the same volume. Following the decision of the German Editor, we chose to present the *Divine Things* according to the layout it had in the first edition. Jacobi did not allude to any specific reason for the regrouping.

10 Ibid., 35-72.

11 Ibid., 72-119. Of great interest for the reader of the *Divine Things* are the additional texts included in the critical German edition of the text: 1) three *Supplements* on specific passages of the *Divine Things* (F.H. Jacobi, *Von den göttlichen Dingen*, 120-136); 2) the *Vorrede* (dated June 15th, 1816) to the third volume of the Jacobi's *Werkausgabe* (F.H. Jacobi, *Werke* (Leipzig: Gerhard Fleischer, 1968) III-XXXVI), this volume included a second, unchanged edition of the *Divine Things*, together with the *Letter to Fichte*, the treatise *Über das Unternehmen des Kriticismus, die Vernunft zu Verstande zu bringen, und der Philosophie überhaupt eine neue Absicht zu geben*, and 23 letters (F.H. Jacobi, *Von den göttlichen Dingen*, 137-153); 3) the introductory note to the aforementioned second edition of the *Divine Things* (1816) (F.H. Jacobi, *Werke* (Leipzig: Gerhard Fleischer, 1968), 247-255; F.H. Jacobi, *Von den göttlichen Dingen*, 155-161); 4) a short manuscript (dated 1814/15) that was attached to a letter to Perthes and represents a draft to the introductory note to the second edition of the *Divine Things* (F.H. Jacobi, *Von den göttlichen Dingen*, 163-166).

12 The *Über eine Weissagung Lichtenbergs* appears in *Schriften zum Streit um die göttlichen Dingen und ihre Offenbarung* within *JWA* III, 7–31. It represents the introductory essay of *Von den göttlichen Dingen und Ihrer Offenbarung* according to the layout of the volume published in 1811. As independent text it was first published in *Taschenbuch für das Jahr 1802*, ed. Jacobi, J. Georg. Hamburg, Perthes 1802, 3–46. Cf. *Editorischer Bericht*, in *JWA III*, 174-175. Afterwards, in 1816, Jacobi published it for the third time in the third volume of the F.H. Jacobi, *Werke*, ed. Köppen, J.F., and Roth, C.J.F., vols. I-VI. Leipzig: Gerhard Fleischer, 1812-1825. Reprinted, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968 (henceforth, *Werke*) as independent treatise without further justification of this rearrangement.

of the fourth volume (printed in 1783) of the Complete Works of the Messenger of Wandsbeck (Matthias Claudius' appellation; who was also known with the penname "Asmus").[13] According to Jacobi's original plan, the review should have been published in the *Unparteiischer Correspondent* (Hamburg). Yet, as the length of the essay progressively increased, he resolved to re-edit it as an autonomous text. It was clear to him that the formerly drafted disquisition had reached a different editorial status, so the publication was finally announced for the third Sunday after Easter 1798.[14]

According to these few merely historical introductory notes we may give credit to the assumption that the theoretical content of the volume published in 1811 is not only coherent with Jacobi's philosophical concerns arisen at the beginning of the so called *Atheismusstreit*—or even before—but it also constitutes a pamphlet against Schelling's philosophy. Jacobi uses excerpts of the review to Claudius's work (and therefore, parts of the *Divine Things*) in his *Letter to Fichte* (1799) as well as his contribution to Reinhold's *Beyträge zur leichtern Uebersicht des Zustandes der Philosophie beym Anfange des 19. Jahrhunderts*, which would appear under the title *Ueber das Unternehmen des Kriticismus, die Vernunft zu Verstande zu bringen, und der Philosophie überhaupt eine neue Absicht zu geben*.[15] To stress even more the continuity of Jacobi's philosophy in the last 20 years of his life, we can signal that the essay *Ueber das Unternehmen des Kriticismus*—originally published in 1802—was re-published untouched by Jacobi within the edition of the Complete Works (henceforth *Werke*) that he himself supervised ten years later. Although Jacobi introduced some changes in the second version of it, they are so minor as essentially to respect what he says in the *Vorbericht zu der gegenwärtigen neuen Ausgabe*: "not even a syllable has been changed". Further evidence in favor of Jacobi's overall coherent *Denkweg* comes from his decision to put in the *Divine Things* a long passage formerly placed in the Appendix III of the *Letter to Fichte*. This general prospect over some textual data accounts for the substantial

13 M. Claudius, *Asmus omnia sua secum portans, oder, Sämmtliche Werke des Wandsbecker Bothen* ..., vol. IV, Breslau: Löwe, 1783.
14 Cf. *Editorischer Bericht*, in *JWA 3*, 178.
15 Cf. *Editorischer Bericht*, in *JWA 2,2*, 480, and *Editorischer Bericht*, in *JWA 3*, 178.

unity of Jacobi's philosophical endeavour throughout his lifelong enterprise; at least, according to his intentions.

As we shall see, the alleged and self-proclaimed consistency of Jacobi's thought—which purportedly lies on the ground of the project to publish the complete collection of his own works and enlivens the uninterrupted process of editing and re-editing his own texts—aims to present a solid and clear philosophical alternative to the modern philosophical tradition in general and its late idealistic outcomes in particular. A tremendous task that Jacobi lived throughout.

The evidence corroborating the hypothesis of continuity seems to support yet one more interpretative hypothesis, which refers to the fact that the *Divine Things* does not aim to criticize Schelling's philosophy in the first place.[16] That the *Divine Things* reworks and brings to conclusion some ideas that Jacobi presented as early as 1785 reinforces the impression that Schelling's philosophy of identity does not provide the proper theoretical framework within which the *Divine Things* has to be interpreted but, more properly, it only sets the circumstance that inspires Jacobi's further analysis of systematic philosophy in general and transcendental idealism in particular.

The section that allegedly criticizes Schelling's philosophy should rather be regarded as a functional component of a long undertaking that was inaugurated, at least, at the turn of the century[17]. The *Divine Things* appeared on the stage only in 1811, but it seemingly brought to an end

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16 See Wilhelm Weischedel, *Jacobi und Schelling. Eine philosophisch-theologische Kontroverse* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969), Franz Wolfinger, *Denken und Transzendenz - Zum Problem ihrer Vermittlung: Der unterschiedliche Weg der Philosophien F.H. Jacobis und F.W.J. Schellings und ihre Konfrontation im Streit um die Göttlichen Dingen (1811/12)* (Frankfurt a.M., Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 1981), Xavier Tilliette, *Une philosophie en devenir* (Paris: Vrin, 1992), 573.

17 For a careful scrutiny of the relationship between Jacobi and Schelling attested by their letters to each other and to friends, see *JWA* III, 179-184. Of great relevance is Jacobi's letter to Fries, sent on November the 26th, 1807 – hence few weeks later after Schelling's speech *Ueber das Vernhältniß der bildenden Künste zu der Natur* hold at the *Akademie der Wissenschaften* in Munich – which reads: "At the moment I am busy with a new essay of Schelling's doctrine, at which the academic treatise of this master *Über des Verhältniß der bildenden Künste zur Natur* has irresistibly driven me. I was shocked by the enchanting method he uses there, the deceit that has actually carried out by means of the language. To make it very explicit, I think that Schelling's creator of the world has forever and ever created nothing but time. The one primeval (*unzeitlich*) life (Being without consciousness (*Bewußtsein*), or as they call it: a being of knowing self-concealing from knowing, in Schelling's language: mere operational science, blind, unintentional, etcetera) transforms itself in an infinitely multiple temporality (Being with Consciousness), so that life is lived. There is only a quality: life as such. All other qualities or properties are only different quantities or quantifications of this one quality, which is at the same time substance itself and the whole essence. Man has more of it than the mystic, but he has in himself neither better nor higher. Every living being lives only one and the same life. Yet the totality, the all, nature, chews like an old woman forever and ever with empty jaws, passing the time. The magnificence of man, the pure gold of truth and life consists in recognizing this."

a convulsed period of controversies that started as early as the end of the XVIII century with the *Letter to Fichte*. That distinct polemic—focused on the evolution of transcendental philosophy—continued after the *Letter to Fichte* with Reinhold's *Ueber das absolute Identitätssystem, oder den neuesten reinen Rationalismus des Herrn Schelling und dessen Verhältniß zum rationalen Realismus* (1802), which received a bitter reply by Schelling that same year. The same polemic increased with Hegel's essay published in the *Kritische Journal der Philosophie* entitled *Glauben und Wissen: oder die Reflexionsphilosophie der Subjektivität in der Vollständigkeit ihrer Formen als Kantische, Jacobische und Fichtesche Philosophie* (1802) which was followed the next year by J.F. Köppen's *Schellings Lehre oder das Ganze der Philosophie des absoluten Nichts* published along with Jacobi's *Drei Briefe an Köppen*. This does not prove that Schelling and Jacobi—who in public continued to have a rather friendly relationship until the publication of the *Divine Things*—embodied for over a decade the two chief figures of a larger dispute; it only offers the image of the development of an extensive controversy on form and principles of "divine things" that included figures such as: K.L. Reinhold, J.F. Fries, C.G. Bardili, Jan Paul, Friedrich Bouterwek, G.E. Schulze, Friedrich Schlegel, A.K.A. v. Eschenmayer and others.[18] We might deem the overall debate to have made of Jacobi the representative of the criticism of post-Kantian philosophy, and of Schelling the representative of a superseding form of transcendental philosophy. The rich panorama of disputes might have coagulated around those two names the constellations of issues that are related to the possibility and configuration of absolute knowledge. As a consequence, this impression might have affected the general consideration (both then and today) of the real

A letter to Jean Paul proves Jacobi's long and extensive endeavour to complete his work on the *Divine Things*: "my dear, I am currently about to complete the work on revelation that I began 13 years ago in Hamburg", September, 13th 1809. Jacobi does not mention Schelling's doctrine in this letter; it rather calls attention to the main theoretical task to which he had dedicated himself for 13 years. See also Jacobi's letter to Perthes, *JWA* III, 183.

[18] Cf. W. Jaeschke (ed.), *Transzendentalphilosophie und Spekulation, Quellen*, in *Philosophisch-Literarische Streitsachen*, 2.1, and also W. Jaeschke (ed.), *Religionsphilosophie und spekulative Theologie, Quellen*, in *Philosophisch-Literarische Streitsachen*, 3.1. A quick look at the letters of some figures involved in the philosophical disputes in Germany in the early Nineteenth century makes us appreciate the degree of anticipation that surrounded the publication of the *Divine Things*: Jean Paul and Friedrich Schlegel were eagerly expecting (the first in a letter sent on August 13th, the latter in a letter dated November 23rd 1811) this last work by Jacobi; whereas Schelling in a letter to K.J.H. Windischmann (November 12th, 1811) asked whether the book had yet been issued. Cf. JWA III 174-175.

relationship between Jacobi's and Schelling's philosophy to the extent of a misleading interpretation of the real intentions and focuses of their concrete efforts. This is valid at least considering Jacobi's viewpoint.

Furthermore, it might look surprising that as a new edition of the *Divine Things* was ready—between the end of 1815 and the beginning of 1816—Jacobi's remarks do not bear trace of the so-called "Streit um die Göttlichen Dingen" that ignited the German philosophical debate between 1812 and 1816 and that allegedly had Schelling and Jacobi as central figures. A series of works appeared on stage as response to Jacobi's *Divine Things*, including: F.W.J. Schelling's *Denkmal der Schrift von den göttlichen Dingen [et]c. des Herrn Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi und der ihm in derselben gemachten Beschuldigung eines absichtlich täuschenden, Lüge redenden Atheismus* (published in 1812, as Pauline Gotter noted, "within a month" from Jacobi's work),[19] J.F. Fries's *Von Deutscher Philosophie Art und Kunst. Ein Votum für Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi gegen F.W.J. Schelling* (1812), Jakob Salat's *Erläuterung einiger Hauptpunkte der Philosophie. Mit Zugaben über den neusten Widerstreit in den wissenschaftlichen Ansichten der Hrn. Fr. Heinr. Jacobi, F.W.J. Schelling und Fr. Schlegel* (1812); the reviews authored by Friedrich Bouterwek, J.F. Fries, and Friedrich Schlegel complete the profile of this intense—sometimes passionate—dispute.[20] Notably, Jacobi took into consideration all those works above cited, yet ignored Schelling's

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19 In a letter dated January 14th, 1812 Schelling speaks of "offner Krieg," a war waged on him by Jacobi, which started raging as early as 1803 when J.Fr. Köppen published his *Schellings Lehre oder das Ganze der Philosophie des absoluten Nichts* (Hamburg: Perthes, 1803) together with three letters by Jacobi in which the term "Krieg" is overtly mentioned. This literary war was not confined to Munich but reached Goethe in Weimar as showed by W. Jaeschke (ed.), *Religionsphilosophie und spekulative Theologie. Der Streit um die Göttlichen Dingen (1799-1812). Quellenband* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1994), 318. See also G. Wenz, *Von den göttlichen Dingen und Ihre Offenbarung. Zum Streit Jacobis mit Schelling 1811/12* (München: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2011), 3-19, especially footnotes 4-8.

20 We can also mention Georg Ellinger's *Der Werth der positive Offenbarung, aus der Unhaltbarkeit der bisherigen philosophischen Bemühungen*, published in *Deutsches Museum* (1812), but it merely repeats Fr. Schlegel's position. On this topic please see *Religionsphilosophie und spekulative Theologie. Die Streit um die Göttlichen Dingen (1799-1812). Quellenband*, ed. by W. Jaeschke, Hamburg: Meiner, 1994, VIII. See also *Streit um die Göttlichen Dingen. Die Auseinandersetzung zwischen Jacobi und Schelling*. *Mit einer Einleitung von Wilhelm Weischedel*, ed. by W. Weischedel. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967, 76-80. Interestingly a great group of scholars and thinkers stood by Schelling's *Naturphilosophie/Identitätsphilosophie*, e.g. J.A.G. Schaffroth, H. Steffens, and J.W. v. Goethe among others, instead of by Jacobi's view on Revelation. By the time of the second edition in 1816 of the *Divine Things* the *Streit um die Göttliche Dingen* had already ceased. A last fallout was attested by F. Schlegel's review of Jacobi's *Werke*, in *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, VIII, pp. 585-596. W. Jaeschke is of the opinion that the same *Streit* impacted on Hegel's thinking as well as Schelling's late philosophy. Cf. *JWA* III, 186.

polemical essay. This could be interpreted both as a testimony of Jacobi's dismissive detachment from Schelling's reaction, or as a reasoned stance in agreement with Jacobi's broader philosophical concern than a direct contention with Schelling would betray.[21]

Our study addresses the question concerning the extent to which Jacobi's early ideas are contained in his late philosophy and, consequently, why the *Divine Things* cannot be viewed as a pamphlet against Schelling's philosophy only. Clearly, we do not abide by the author's opinion about his own work, but we definitely should acknowledge his firm effort to develop a coherent and univocal conception of the truth that progressively unfolds from his writings on Kant and Fichte to his late contribution on the dispute about the limits of transcendental philosophy. In other words, we shall see that in the *Divine Things* Jacobi laid the foundations for a new account of rational thinking which emerges out of the Kantian framework and takes Schelling's philosophy of identity as a polemical target only inasmuch as it represents the newer evolution of transcendental philosophy as such. This polemic fulfills the function of presenting Jacobi's original idea about the profoundly transcendent nature of man which makes of human nature itself a divine thing. His definition of the I—which for transcendental idealism is cradle and apex of *absolute knowledge*—will instead yield a quite new understanding of the notion of *finitude*. We shall see that human finitude is what makes the I stand out as a sublime activity that provides the paradigm for the definition of divine things in general. As Pseudo-Longinus states in his treatise *On the Sublime*: "sublime thoughts belong properly to the loftiest minds" (chapter IX), the only, among the minds, that are able to single out "*ta daimonia*" (divine things) from those other things that fill up the horizon of normal people "whose whole lives are wasted in paltry and illiberal thoughts and habits."

Bibliographical overview and theoretical perspectives

[21] In a letter to Jean Paul dated September 13, 1809 Jacobi mentions that he was trying to bring to conclusion his work "on Revelation" without even alluding to Schelling's philosophy; the same happens in the letter Jacobi sends to the editor Perthes in May 1811, where he announces the conclusion of the manuscript: no mention of Schelling is made. Cf. Jacobi to Jean Paul, September 13, 1809, see *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi's auserleser Briefwechsel*, ed. Friedrich Roth (henceforth ABW, followed by the number of the volume) vol. II, (Leipzig: Fleischer, 1825-27), 413; and Jacobi to Perthes, May 4, 1811, ABW II, 177, footnote 14.

Interest in Jacobi's philosophy has been flourishing thanks primarily to the publication of the German critical edition of his Correspondence (*Briefausgabe*) and Works (*Werke. Gesamtausgabe*) which started as far back as the early 1980s. All in all, there will be forty-three volumes, thirteen of Works (texts and appendices) and thirty of Correspondence (texts and commentaries), all published by Meiner (Hamburg) and Frommann-Holzboog (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt). As a testimony of Jacobi's lively literary production and networking, both his correspondence and the project *Jacobi-Wörterbuch-online* sponsored by Sächsische Akademie der Wissenschaft (Leipzig) —still in the making—offer a vivid picture of the intellectual and political scene of the time. Since Jacobi seems to represent such a great point of connection between philosophical, literary, artistic, and political interests, a critical edition of Jacobi's notebooks is in preparation: F.H. Jacobi, *Die Denkbücher*, ed. by Sophia V. Krebs, which is supposed to be brought to conclusion by 2020 in 4 volumes.

Notwithstanding this outstanding industry around Jacobi's works, it would be hasty to believe that today we are witnessing some kind of 'Jacobi-Renaissance'. As early as 1970, Gerhard Höhn published a brief report in the ″Revue philosophique de Louvain‟ entitled *La renaissance de la pensée de F.H. Jacobi.*[22] Since the late 1960s, interest in Jacobi's philosophy has been growing, reaching a climax between the 1970 and 1990. We can consider those two decades as a moment when a general turning point in the scholarship on Jacobi occurred. Scholars in Germany, Italy, France, and North America started considering Jacobi's philosophy for its own sake rather than in polemical connection to other philosophers.[23] 1969 can be considered the fundamental moment in

[22] G. Höhn, *La renaissance de la pensée de F.H. Jacobi*, "Revue philosophique de Louvain", LXVIII, 1970, pp. 100-103.

[23] Bibliographical information can easily be found in U. Rose, *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi. Eine Bibliographie*, Stuttgart-Weimar, Metzler, 1993; M. Ivaldo, *Introduzione a Jacobi*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2003; V. Verra, *F.H. Jacobi. Dall'Illuminismo all'idealismo*, Torino, Edizioni di Filosofia, 1963; K. Hammacher, *Kritik und Leben. II: Die Philosophie F.H. Jacobi*, München, W. Fink Verlag, 1969; B. Sandkaulen, *Grund und Ursache. Die Vernunftkritik Jacobis*, München, Fink, 2000; K. Homann, *F.H. Jacobis Philosophie der Freiheit*, Freiburg-München, Karl-Alber, 1973; S. Kahlefeld, *Dialektik und Sprung in Jacobis Philosophie*, Würzburg, Königshausen u. Neumann, 2000.

the scholarly research on Jacobi. At Jacobi's *Haus* in Düsseldorf, celebrating the 150th anniversary of his death, the most prominent specialists gathered together following the impulse that few publications had given to the debate. In fact, two volumes in the early sixties, V. Verra, *F.H. Jacobi*. *Dall'Illuminismo all'idealismo* (1963) and O.F. Bollnow, *Die Lebensphilosophie F.H. Jacobis*, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, (1966, including the edition of a study originally published in 1933), and two other volumes that will be published by the end of 1969, K. Hammacher, *Die Philosophie Friedrich Heinrich Jacobis*, München, Fink, and G. Baum, *Vernunft und Erkenntnis. Die Philosophie F.H. Jacobis*, Bonn, Bouvier, gave new life to the study of Jacobi's thought. M.M. Olivetti gave an account of this congress two years before the proceedings were published: M.M. Olivetti, *La 'Jacobi-Tagung' a Düsseldorf*, in "Bollettino Filosofico", III (12), 1969, pp. 221-222. The proceedings of the congress were published in *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi. Philosoph und Literat der Goethezeit. Beiträge einer Tagung in Düsseldorf (16.-19. 10. 1969) aus Anlaß seines 150. Todestages und Berichte*, hrsg. von K. Hammacher, Frankfurt a. M., Vittorio Klosterman, 1971, and concur in recognizing the value and height of Jacobi's philosophy. These publications seem to concur in presenting the set of issues that Jacobi's thought stresses. They all maintain that the historical function of Jacobi's thought consists in bringing transcendental philosophy to the core of its problems: philosophy does not make room for knowledge when what is known is a finite object conceived as independent of the knower. The same applies to ethics: an action is philosophically unconceivable when the subject is defined as independent of universal moral law.

In the English-speaking world, George di Giovanni's works are philologically fundamental and philosophically unmatched. In his edition published by McGill-Queen's, he introduced English readers to Jacobi's main philosophical writings and the novel *Allwill*. This tome prompted and inspired in many respects the present research.[24] The extensive study that di Giovanni placed as introduction to his edition develops those ideas that the book edited by K. Hammacher in 1971

[24] F.H. Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel* Allwill, tr. and ed. by G. di Giovanni, Montréal & Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994.

suggested; but di Giovanni goes much farther. He brings to light that Jacobi's strategy of revealing the problems of systematic philosophy shows that those same dichotomies and frictions are never surpassed by Jacobi's non-philosophy. On the contrary, they became even more radical. Jacobi promotes ideas that prove Jacobi's reliance on the Enlightenment: the dualism between matter and spirit, the dependence of knowledge on the senses (both material and spiritual), the dialectical form of a social rationality, the indulgence in making the self the center of moral and epistemological architecture.

The present research assumes the results of di Giovanni's research, and tries to develop them in light of what di Giovanni does not take into consideration in his edition: the text *On Divine Things and their Revelation*. We will see that in this text Jacobi's "unfinished philosophy" will radicalize its unfinished-ness—if we may say so—since the different forms of dualism will turn from being philosophical inacceptable to being philosophically reactionary. It will become clear that Jacobi accepts that his philosophy is neither all-encompassing nor grounded on one sole principle, for it rather consists in an observation of the transcendent—and therefore dual—dimension of human beings.

More recently, the originality of Jacobi's theoretical efforts has been the topic of a volume edited by Walter Jaeschke and Birgit Sandkaulen, *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi. Ein Wendepunkt der geistigen Bildung der Zeit* (2004).[25] The volume brings to the fore the philosophical nature of issues that Jacobi considers in his works and letters. It promotes with great effort the evolution of the international interpretation of his philosophy, which today has become totally affranchised from the improper label "Glaubensphilosophie".

Among the many articles that this volume collects, two in particular need to be signaled: Gottfried Gabriel, *Von der Vorstellung zur Darstellung. Realismus in Jacobis "David Hume"*, and Walter Jaeschke, *Eine Vernunft, welche nicht die Vernunft ist. Jacobis Kritik der Aufklärung*. They

[25] W. Jaeschke und B. Sandkaulen, *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi: Ein Wendepunkt der geistigen Bildung der Zeit* Hamburg, Meiner Verlag, 2004.

both draw on Jacobi's internal criticism of the notion of knowledge by displaying Jacobi's unprecedented form of skepticism with regard to justified knowledge. The first comments on the connection of Jacobi's notion of faith (*Glauben*) with Wittgenstein's notion of certainty (*Gewissheit*), signaling how both Jacobi and Wittgenstein hold "immediacy" to be something more and different than a special kind of knowledge. Immediacy seems to open epistemology to a broader discourse about the special status of human activities, which include epistemology. Humans have a one-of-a-kind vocabulary that affords the gathering of information without producing justified knowledge; this vocabulary refers to actions such as showing or indicating (*Zeigen*); this action reveals (*offenbart*) something that is not known, but cannot be doubted either. The article by Walter Jaeschke instead offers a bright description of Jacobi's account of reason (*Vernunft*), which is defined as the ability to connect, and to achieve the correspondence of, the internal with the external. *Vernehmen* is thus the proper description of reason's activity, be it understood in a transcendental or ontological way. Accordingly, correspondence theory is supported in Jacobi's text, though the definition of ″what‴ is corresponded remains problematic.

More recently, some publications on Jacobi have drawn decisive attention to the historical sources and theoretical fruit of his non-philosophy. Based mainly on the results of B. Sandkaulen's tome *Grund und Ursache (2000),*[26] two monographs present different but consonant approaches to Jacobi's so-called *Unphilosophie*: *Individualität als Fundamentalgefühl (2013)* by O. Koch, and *Zwischen Metaphysik und Metaphysikkritik* (2015) by K. Sommer.[27] We will linger on the analysis of these two books because they provide, like the study by George di Giovanni, a fundamental step in building the basis of the present research. It will also allow us briefly to make explicit few pages of Spinoza that help frame the following investigation.

[26] B. Sandkaulen, *Grund und Ursache: Die Vernunftkritik Jacobis,* München, Fink, 2000.
[27] O. Koch, *Individualität als Fundamentalgefühl. Zur Metaphysik der Person bei Jacobi und Jean Paul*, Hamburg, Meiner, 2013; K. Sommer, *Zwischen Metaphysik und Metaphysikkritik. Heidegger, Schelling und Jacobi*, Hamburg, Meiner, 2015.

Oliver Koch points to the principle "ex nihilo nihil fit" as the defining axiom of the *Geist des Spinozismus*.[28] We need to remember that Jacobi understands Spinoza's philosophy as a display of the *Formularmethode der Geometer*, the epitome of systematic thinking, according to which any thing can be thought only through the principle of sufficient reason.[29] We need also to mention that Spinoza's statement of the principle of sufficient reason first appeared in *The Principles of Descartes' Philosophy* (1663) where the eleventh axiom of Part I reads: "Nothing exists of which it cannot be asked, what is the cause (or reason) [causa (sive ratio)], why it exists."[30] In the explanation Spinoza elaborates: "Since existing is something positive, we cannot say that it has nothing as its cause (by Axiom 7). Therefore, we must assign some positive cause, or reason, why [a thing] exists – either an external one, i.e., one outside the thing itself, or an internal one, one comprehended in the nature and definition of the existing thing itself". Finally, the reference to axiom 7 introduces an alternative to the principle of 'ex nihilo, nihil fit': "no actually existing thing and no actually existing perfection of a thing can have nothing, *or* a thing not existing, as the cause of its existence."[31] In the end, an infinite chain of finite causes displays a whole of reality which does not have beginning in time or space.

Furthermore, the connection between empirical and intellectual origin of a thing is made explicit in another *locus* of Spinoza's body of works; the second definition in Part II of the *Ethics* reads: "I say that to the essence of any thing belongs that which, being given, the thing is necessarily posited and which, being taken away, the thing is necessarily taken away; or that without which the thing can neither be nor be conceived, and which can neither be nor be conceived without the thing". Hence, the corporeal existence and the theoretical definition of a thing coincide,

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[28] The principle, which goes back to Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, is given relevance in Descartes' *Principles of Philosophy*: "[…] when we recognize that it is impossible for anything to come from nothing, the proposition *Nothing comes from nothing* is regarded not as a really existing thing, or even as a mode of a thing, but as an eternal truth which resides within our mind. Such truths are termed common notions or axioms". R. Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, in R. Descartes, *Selected Philosophical Writings*, trans. by J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, and D. Murdoch, Cambridge u.a., Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 176.

[29] Cf. F.H. Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, p. 56.

[30] B. Spinoza, *Descartes' Principles of Philosophy*, in *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, ed. and tr. by E. Curley, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1985, vol. 1, p. 246.

[31] Ibid, p. 244.

and they both depend on another being to provide the cause or reason of that thing. But, at this point, the relation of dependence can take two forms – as is well known: "what cannot be conceived [*concipi*] through another, must be conceived through itself" (*Ethics*, axiom 2, Part I).[32] This relatedness can therefore develop into a chain of finite beings (corporeally and theoretically) connected to each other, or can reflect into itself to shape an autonomous being. This second expression of the relation of dependency gives rise to the concept of *causa sui*: "By cause of itself I understand that whose essence involves existence, or that whose nature cannot be conceived except as existing" (*Ethics*, definition 1, Part I).

Conclusively, Jacobi sees in the principle of sufficient reason the engine of the internal coherent architecture of reality, which includes both existence and essence of finite things. This way, the *causa sui* is interpreted as an immanent principle that, while causing itself, causes the chain of (the reasons of) objects. Generally speaking, Jacobi's reading of Spinoza seeks to unveil the consequences of the equation of concrete generation with theoretical definition.[33] Indeed, within this geometric dimension, we are unable to think a real absolute beginning; for example, the very concept of *free action* becomes meaningless. Within this geometry we cannot deem ourselves the origin of any deed, because we must admit that it is intellectually unreasonable to oppose the Spinozistic geometry of reality:[34] we are spurred to define our actions as coming into existence from us, but the principle of sufficient reason throws our actions into the chain of reasons and turns what we call 'free action' into a necessary consequence of a system. Therefore, the notion of 'free action' would require another way of thinking, which would finally oppose the principle of sufficient reason. Yet, this brief and general analysis of Jacobi's argument introduces us to a very specific theme: Jacobi's philosophical effort does not focus on finite objects in general, it rather focuses on finite subjects which are not—this is his assumption—passive elements within a

[32] All quotations come from B. Spinoza, *Ethics*, in *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, ed. and tr. by E. Curley, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1985, vol. 2.
[33] Koch, *Individualität*, p. 49 ff.
[34] Ibid, p. 60.

geometrical whole, for they represent absolute and individual beginnings. Thus, the underlining interest of Jacobi's interpretation of Spinoza's texts is not strictly theoretical but practical, and it finally harmonizes with a vision in which the finitude of the subject (i.e. its being absolutely enclosed and limited, hence defined in itself) is also the source of his autonomy.

But how can we conceptualize this autonomy if the principle of sufficient reason rules over our intellectual activities? Is the autonomy of a human agent a mere delusion? The apparent empirical dimension of the discourse about actions and agents becomes 'transcendent' in the very moment we accept—as Jacobi seems to do—that there is no way to know reality other than the one that the principle of sufficient reason provides. Therefore, we must appeal to a transcendent basis of freedom, person, and those other '*Dinge'* that elude scientific thinking. Koch underlines that Jacobi considers Spinoza's philosophy as a coherent and consistent system, but he also observes that this adoption implies the rejection of the individuality of moral agents. This rejection can be bypassed only if we appeal to a different epistemology.

The second edition of the Letters on Spinoza brings Jacobi not only to elaborate his concept of *faith* (*Glaube*) more efficiently, but also to praise the constitutive attitude of Kantian practical reason. As is well known, practical reason is regulative in the field of the empirical world; however, practical reason also shows the possibility of constituting unconditioned objects, ideas. They represent the paradigm of those absolute objects that inhabit an alternative epistemology to the systematic thinking. For this reason, Koch leads the reader through the pages of the dialogue *David Hume* while keeping track on the development of Jacobi's interest in Kant's practical reason.[35] As a consequence, the notion of *Sinnlichkeit* becomes the key to Jacobi's notion of metaphysics, which rejects neither science nor its perfect geometry (at least not entirely) but alludes to the necessity for an *openness*. Once the subject is confronted by something absolutely different from itself, both his actions and his knowledge regain meaning. In fact, I can deem myself the real cause of my actions

[35] Ibid, pp. 78 and ff.

and not a simple joint in a progression of events; but I can also deem the object of my knowledge a real object and not the production of my thinking. As Koch highlights, *Sinnlichkeit* consists in the *medium* between two substances[36] which must be conceived as "unconditioned" and distinct.

No surprise, therefore, if one of the most interesting analysis of Jacobi's non-philosophy appears in a book that moves from Schelling's *Freiheitsschrift* and focuses on the possibility of an ontology that has a critical approach to metaphysics at its basis. Sommer's *Zwischen Metaphysik und Metaphysikkritik. Heidegger, Schelling und Jacobi* seems to embark on a backward journey from Heidegger to Jacobi in search of the sources for a critique against systematic philosophy.[37] In reality, Sommer relies on F.W.J. Schelling's *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit und die damit zusammenhängenden Gegenstände* (1809) in order to provide a comprehensive and clear investigation of those topics that connect Schelling's text with Heidegger's *Kehre.*[38] Sommer shows that this connection is not based on the lectures Heidegger held on Schelling's philosophy only; instead, it goes back to a broader panorama of criticisms of the epistemological limits dictated by Kantian subjectivity. Therefore, Sommer's reference to Jacobi (and his critique of Spinoza)—although not supported by Heidegger's writings—is crucial in framing the long process of emancipation from systematic thinking that philosophy should undergo.

In opposition to the usual fashion of commenting philosophers´ text with scholars' analysis, we dare paraphrase Sommer's purpose with the help of Heidegger's words:

> The adequate execution and completion of this other thinking that abandons subjectivity is surely made more difficult by the fact that in the publication of *Being and Time* the third division of the first part, "Time and Being," was held back… Here everything is reversed. The division in question was held back because thinking [*Denken*] failed in the adequate saying of this turning [*Kehre*] and did not succeed

[36] Ibid, p. 120.
[37] K. Sommer, *Zwischen Metaphysik und Metaphysikkritik. Heidegger, Schelling und Jacobi* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2015).
[38] Ibid, p. 36.

> with the help of the language of metaphysics. […] This turning is not a change of standpoint from *Being and Time*, but in it the thinking that was sought first arrives at the location of that dimension out of which *Being and Time* is experienced, that is to say, experienced from the fundamental experience of the oblivion of Being.[39]

Sommer's somehow covert line of reasoning consists in the thesis according to which understanding Heidegger's *Kehre* can be useful to define the real scope of Jacobi's *Unphilosophie*. Therefore, if the *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* (1936–37) is usually regarded as the text that best represents the inception of the *Kehre*, Sommer does not limit herself to it, but enhances the great relevance that *Der Satz vom Grund* (1955-56) has in defining the dimension of the alternative thinking that Jacobi inaugurated against the entirety of post-Kantian philosophy.

Yet, the complete picture of her work unfolds with Sommer's analysis of Schelling's thought. Schelling's *Freiheitsschrift* introduces freedom as neither the first, nor the ultimate element, but the center of the whole system of philosophy. The opposition between Schelling and Jacobi takes shape with Schelling's attempt to include freedom in a coherent intelligible system; in fact, Schelling tries to counter Spinoza's fatalism following a Spinozist project, i.e. by incorporating freedom (systematically) into immanence and by defining human action within God's life. The final result consists in considering existence as a manifestation of a *Grund*, that discloses itself in a universal life or *Lebendigkeit.*[40] This "*Pantheismus* of freedom" distances itself from Jacobi's efforts to define the personhood in its unconditioned singularity, beyond the enthusiasm for systematicity which reduces real freedom to the internal necessity of a whole. Notwithstanding the distance, Schelling and Jacobi seem to concur in one thing: epistemology and theory of praxis should be thought concurrently and anew.[41]

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39 M. Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism*, in M. Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, ed. by D.F. Krell, New York, Harper, 2008, pp. 213–265, here pp. 231–232.
40 K. Sommer, *Zwischen Metaphysik und Metaphysikkritik. Heidegger, Schelling und Jacobi* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2015), p. 123.
41 Ibid, p. 95 and p. 151.

One century later, Heidegger sees in Schelling's text on freedom not only the climax of German Idealism, but also the cradle of those sources that might renovate metaphysics and expand rationality. Heidegger, in a way that reminds one of Jacobi's thought, sees the notion of free action not only under the frame of a *Handlungstheorie*, but in its ontological relevance, i.e. as the possibility to define being based on human freedom.[42] Sommers painstakingly highlights those fundamental passages which show that Heidegger conceives freedom as the only conceptual key that reveals the hidden connection between system and pantheism.[43] According to Sommer's interpretation of Heidegger's theory, pantheism is not to be conceived as a driving force that annihilates the singular essence of finite things, but as the ground on which finite things can be defined according to their essential freedom.[44] What strikes those who follow the author's most revealing suggestions is that neither Heidegger nor Jacobi manifest any elusiveness in their adherence to the tension between philosophical thought and the notion of the "unconditioned". And yet Heidegger—as opposed to Jacobi—does not foresee the capitulation of logic in a "leap" towards absolute freedom. Unlike Jacobi, Heidegger elaborates a different style of thinking that surpasses the jurisdiction of human *needs*[45] and develops a distinct understanding of the notion of system. In the end, Heidegger's different interpretation of both system and human rational need contrasts with Jacobi's critique against metaphysics. Nevertheless, Heidegger elaborates his thinking on the basis of a feature that Jacobi also puts at the ground of his non-philosophy, namely, receptivity.

Conclusion

[42] Ibid, p. 184.
[43] Ibid, pp. 210-214.
[44] Ibid, p. 226.
[45] Ibid, pp. 341 and ff.

The definition, outcome and systematic consequences of the notion of receptivity are the actual topics of the *Divine Things*. We will see that Jacobi elaborates a theory that includes both sides of receptiveness: the active and the passive. passivity, the so-called ″faculty of perception‴, is supposed to provide the subject with the objective elements of knowledge, which are, like phenomena in the case of the senses, out there. But at the same time, receptivity is also the faculty that defines the subjective power to connect to the world. This connection is not only passive, as one may suppose; it is active in the sense that it defines the necessary opposition between the *relata*. In this sense Jacobi elaborates his definition of individuality.

The subject is not active in the way that Kantian transcendental subjectivity would suggest. The special activity of Jacobi´s notion of receptivity draws from the transcendent dimension of his discourse: the subject receives from the religious dimension (from God) the measure of both its own identity and the identity of the other things. This transcendent form of passive receptivity provides the actual frame for the subject to become a concrete identity acting within different identities. The possibility to act is an integral part of the patrimony that Jacobi´s notion of receptivity bears.

Only because we are subjects created as singular beings by God, and only because we receive God´s laws in the depth of our self, we can see ourselves as singular beings and we can see the world around us as a harmonic cosmos composed by singular beings. This `teaching´ is the core of the divinity of reality, that Jacobi tries to develop on the basis of the problems that the atheistic systematic thinking does not solve.

Divine Things.

The significance of the book within the development

of Jacobi's philosophy.

Intro

As a passionate champion of a kind of liberal individualism, Jacobi claimed that the negation of personal singularity was grounded on a theory of the I deprived of every substance and existence. In his view, the history of modern thinking had obliterated the true I, true reality, and true God in the name of an enthusiasm for explanations. So, in the midst of one of the richest of all philosophical periods, Jacobi denounced philosophy is leading humanity to a total annihilation of the true for the sake of a dangerous illusion.

In order to assess both the alleged illusion and Jacobi's counterreaction, this chapter will offer a few remarks on one of F.H. Jacobi's most famous texts, the *Letter to Fichte* (1799). This text is crucial not only for understanding Jacobi's thought in general, but also for making explicit his future challenges, for it marks a turning point in the development of his thought.[46] As we will see, the *Letter to Fichte* affirms that systematic knowledge (perfectly exemplified by Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*) denies all room for the existence of both the individual being and a personal God.[47] Moreover, on the basis of Jacobi's analysis of transcendental philosophy, the epoch-making equation between

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[46] Friedrich Henrich Jacobi, "Letter to Fichte," in Friedrich Henrich Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel* Allwill, ed. George di Giovanni (Montréal: McGill-Queen University Press, 1994), (henceforth: *Letter to Fichte*) 497-536.

[47] George di Giovanni, "Introduction: The Unfinished Philosophy of Friedrich Henrich Jacobi," in Friedrich Henrich Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel* Allwill, ed. George di Giovanni (Montréal: McGill-Queen University Press, 1994), 3-167 (pp. 67-116). See Birgit Sandkaulen, "Ichheit und Person. Zur Aporie der Wissenschaftslehre in der Debatte zwischen Fichte und Jacobi," in *System und Systemkritik um 1800*, ed. Christian Danz and Jürgen Stolzenberg (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2011), 45-68, and Birgit Sandkaulen, "Daß, was oder wer. Jacobi im Diskurs über Personen," in *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi. Ein Wendepunkt der geistigen Bildung der Zeit*, ed. Walter Jaeschke and Birgit Sandkaulen (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2004), 217-237, and Birgit Sandkaulen, "System und Systemkritik. Überlegungen zur gegenwärtigen Bedeutung eines fundamentalen Problemzusammenhangs," in *System und Systemkritik. Beiträge zu einem Grundproblem der klassischen deutschen Philosophie*, ed. Birgit Sandkaulen (Würzburg: Königshausen u. Neumann, 2006), 11-34.

philosophy and Nihilism is introduced for the first time in history, providing the first account of a concern that will haunt European culture for centuries.

Jacobi, in contrast to many Romantics with whom he was acquainted or in contact, belongs to an older generation of German intellectuals of a foregone age. He started publishing philosophical essays and prose in the 1770s, before the advent of the early German Romantic Movement.[48] But, in a way that associates him with early German Romanticism, he devoted a large part of his works to the identification of true rationality.[49] His tense distrust of an all-encompassing system of knowledge did not result in the worship of irrationalism; rather, it aimed to clear the way for an authentic apprehension of the true, the beautiful, and the good.[50] As it is evident and often overtly proclaimed, the common trait among romantic philosophers, theologians, poets, and artists consists in the rejection of systematic philosophy; but such rejection, at least in Jacobi's case, reflects anything but a different systematic conception of reality.[51]

Atheismusstreit

[48] Jacobi starts publishing philosophical essays and prose in 1970s, a decade in which the systematical proportions of reality had just begun to be challenged by enlightened skepticism and the aesthetic of the *Sturm und Drang*. Rather than at Reinhold or Fichte's re-foundation of a system of science, Jacobi looked at Spinoza and Kant's ethics and epistemology to find the polemical source of his philosophical project.

[49] To inquiry into the origin of the term *Frühromantik*, see Ernst Behler, *Frühromantik* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1992), 13-23. The text provides a general understanding of the overall movement and its chronology.

[50] Friedrich Henrich Jacobi, "David Hume on Faith, or Idealismus and Realismus, A Dialogue: Preface and also Introduction to the Author's Collected Philosophical Works," in Friedrich Henrich Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel* Allwill, trans. George di Giovanni (Montréal: McGill-Queen University Press, 2009), 537-590.

[51] See A.W. Wood, *Fichte's Ethical Thought* (New York: *Oxford University Press*, 2016), 12-22. Notoriously, defining the relationship that the romantics had with the idea of system is not an easy task. Scholarship has long debated whether early German Romanticism had to be considered a reaction against systematic reason altogether. Lately, the debate has definitely evolved towards a more documented interpretation of different conceptions of systematicity that are distinctive of the early German Romanticism. On this see Dieter Henrich, *Konstellationen. Probleme und Debatten am Ursprung der idealistischen Philosophie (1789-1795)*, (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992). See also Manfred Frank, *"Unendliche Annäherung" - Die Anfänge der philosophischen Frühromantik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), and Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative. The Concept of Early German Romanticism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

Notoriously, in the second issue of the first volume of the *Athenaeum* Friedrich Schlegel proclaimed the three paradigms of his era: the French Revolution, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, and Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*.[52] Notwithstanding this honorific salutation, the romantics developed quite a bitter dissatisfaction with the fallout from Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*. At first, Fichte's moral and political ideas inflamed intellectuals' enthusiasm because his elaboration of Kantian spontaneity connects freedom and necessity under a deterinate principle: the I. Yet, Fichte's doctrine of knowledge conflicted with the ethical, aesthetic, and religious fervor of Early German Romanticism. The romantics were dismayed by that fact that Fichte's philosophy promoted a rational system dominated by the mechanical lawfulness of the I, which reduced to nothingness any otherness.[53] Fichte erected a system in which concrete otherness (the non-I) is unquestionably banished: "I discover myself to be free of any influence from the sensible world, absolutely active in and through myself," and he continues: "and thus I discover myself to be a power elevated above everything sensible."[54] Eventually, on the basis of the conceptual self-sufficiency of the I, the distance between Fichte and the romantics quickly grew, finding in the so-called Atheism controversy its climax - though surely not its conclusion.[55]

The Atheism controversy started over two essays - one authored by Fichte himself and the other by F.K. Forberg - that appeared in 1798 in the *Philosophical Journal*, a periodical that Fichte

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52 Friedrich Schlegel, "Athenaeum Fragments," *The early political writings of the German romantics*, ed. Frederick Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 118. On the debt that *Frühromantik* may have incurred to Fichte's philosophy, see the following groundbreaking texts: Rudolf Haym, *Die romantische Schule* (Berlin: Gaertner, 1882), Nicolai Hartmann, *Die Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1923), and Hermann August Korff, *Geist der Goethezeit* (Leipzig: Koehler und Amelang, 1964).

53 See Daniel Breazeale, "Introduction," in J.G. Fichte, *Early Writings*, ed. Daniel Breazeale (New York: Cornell University Press 1988), 24.

54 Johann Gottlieb Fichte, "On the Basis of Our Belief in a Divine Governance of the World," in *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings (1797–1800)*, ed. Daniel Breazeale (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 147.

55 On origin and consequences of the Athesimusstreit, please see *Fichtes Entlassung: der Atheismusstreit vor 200 Jahren*, ed. Klaus-M. Kodalle and Martin Ohst (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1999). Many are the authors that in the last decades have published valuable works on this topic, but for a first orientation to the complex history of early reception of Fichte's philosophy, please see *Fichte und seine Zeit*, ed. Matteo Vincenzo d'Alfonso, Carla de Pascale, Erich Fuchs, and Marco Ivaldo (Fichte-Studien 43 and 44), (Leiden: Brill, 2016 and 2017); George di Giovanni, "The First Twenty Years of Critique: The Spinoza Connection," in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 417-448; Elizabeth Millàn-Zaibert, *Friedrich Schlegel and the Emergence of Earl German Romanticism* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), especially 53-94; Bernward Loheide, *Fichte und Novalis: Transzendentalphilosophisches Denken im romantisierenden Diskurs* (Amsterdam: Rodopoi, 2000).

co-edited with F.P.I. Niethammer. Fichte's *On the basis of our belief in a divine governance of the world* serves as a reply and an introduction to Forberg's, *Development of the idea of religion* and provides an explanation of both points of agreement and disagreement with the latter. But, more importantly, Fichte also had the opportunity to explain his "thoughts on this topic" that indeed "follow from his own philosophical views."

The somehow simplistic contribution of Forberg has the merit of stating in clear terms a critical idea that was growing in popularity: "religion is neither a product of experience nor a discovery of speculation, but rather merely and only the fruit of a morally good heart" which wishes to "maintain the upper hand over the evil in the world."[56] Consequently, the only concept of deity admissible is "the sublime spirit who governs the world in accordance with moral laws."[57] In this thesis one may recognize a rather unscrupulous rendering of Kant's moral doctrine; and, despite its laxity, it surely raises issues with which Fichte himself was familiar. Only a few years before, in the most popular of his writings, the *Foundation of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* (1794-1795), Fichte clearly maintains that the idea of a deity is unthinkable.[58] Moreover, in the acclaimed *Attempt at a Critique of all revelation* (1792), he states—following the precepts of Kant's philosophy—that the idea of God is "based on an alienation (*Entäusserung*) of what is ours"[59] and that religion develops from this alienation. What Fichte writes in his *On the basis of our belief in a divine governance of the world* is, therefore, perfectly congruent with this very general framework: "the living and efficaciously acting moral order is itself God. We require no other God, nor can we grasp any other."[60]

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56 Friedrich Karl Forberg, "Development of the Concept of Religion," in *J.G. Fichte and the Atheism Dispute (1798-1800)*, ed. Yolanda Estes and Curtis Bowman (Burlington: Ashgate Farnham, 2010), 39.
57 Friedrich Karl Forberg, "Development," 37.
58 See Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Foundations of the Entire Science of Knowledge*, in Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Science of Knowledge* (*Wissenschaftslehre*), ed. Peter Heath and John Lachs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 225. See also Johann Gottlieb Fichte, "On the Basis of Our Belief in a Divine Governance of the World," in *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings (1797–1800)*, ed. Daniel Breazeale (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 149-151.
59 Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation*, ed. G. Green (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 73.
60 Johann Gottlieb Fichte, "On the Basis of Our Belief in a Divine Governance of the World," in *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings (1797–1800)*, ed. Daniel Breazeale (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 151. In a concise reconstruction of those events A.W. Wood hints at Fichte's social solitude: in his writings, his political and philosophical radicalism was blended with religious symbols and terminology, so as to estrange both secular and religious movements. See A.W. Wood, *Fichte's Ethical Thought* (New York: Oxford University press, 2016) 19. To be sure, Fichte thinks that God can be attained through knowledge; God does not show itself via analogy or as an "als-ob",

After the publication of the journal, political and academic agitation arose. This was witnessed in the circulation of an anonymous pamphlet entitled, *A Father's letter to his son, studying at the University, concerning the Atheism of Fichte and Forberg*, the arraignment by the theologian - and Fichte's friend - F.V. Reinhardt on behalf of the Grand Duke Charles August, and Reinhold's own letter, to mention only but a few examples.[61] With very few exceptions—e.g. H. Paulus and F. Bouterwek—Fichte appeared to be abandoned by his colleagues, old friends, and allies. Turmoil around Fichte's public activities was not new: as early as his essay in defense of the French revolution (1793), Fichte had already suffered a number of public and private attacks because of his alleged political Jacobinism, religious impiety, and moral intransigence. But nothing was comparable to what he suffered during the Atheism Controversy.[62]

As could be expected of Fichte, he wrote a hasty, direct response to his critics. As a result, the situation worsened. Fichte published the famous *Doctors und Ordentlichen Professors zu Jena Appellation an das Publikum über die durch ein Kurf. Sächs. Confiscationsresccript ihm Beigemessenen Atheistischen Aeusserungen* (1799)[63] soliciting Jacobi's intervention in the name of the shared view according to which "belief or faith is the element of all certainty."[64] At that time he was not aware that he was marching up to the cannon's mouth. Following Lavater's advice, Jacobi replied with the famous open letter, which was published with both Fichte and Reinhold's agreement.[65]

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rather it refers to the "starting point (*das absolut erste*) of all objective cognition." Johann Gottlieb Fichte, "On the Basis of Our Belief in a Divine Governance of the World," in *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings (1797–1800)*, ed. Daniel Breazeale (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 151.

61 Karl Leonhard Reinhold, "Letter to Fichte," in *J.G. Fichte and the Atheism Dispute (1798-1800)*, ed. Yolanda Estes and Curtis Bowman (Burlington: Ashgate Farnham, 2010), 127-144.

62 As it is well known Fichte's *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation* was rejected by the Theological Faculty of Halle.

63 Johann Gottlieb Fichte, "Appeal to the Public," in *J. G. Fichte and the Atheism Dispute (1798–1800)*, ed. Yolanda Estes and Curtis Bowman (Burlington: Ashgate Farnham, 2010) 85–125. See also the more cautious "From a Private Letter," in *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings (1797–1800)*, ed. Daniel Breazeale (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 155-176.

64 Johann Gottlieb Fichte, "On the Basis of Our Belief in a Divine Governance of the World," in *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings (1797–1800)*, ed. Daniel Breazeale (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 147. For further considerations on Fichte's hope for Jacobi's help, one should take into consideration the notion of "göttliches Leben" mentioned by Fichte in his *Appellation*. Unfortunately, we cannot indulge in an analysis of this text.

65 For a general introduction to Jacobi's letter, please see Klaus Hammacher, "Jacobis Brief "An Fichte" (1799)," in *Transzendentalphilosophie und Spekulation. Der Streit um die Gestalt einer Ersten Philosophie (1799-–1807)*, ed.

Jacobi's *Letter to Fichte*: the rise of nihilism

The *Letter to Fichte* is a manifesto of dissatisfaction; it is both a critique of the ambitions of systematic thinking and an exposition of the true destiny of speculation. The dissatisfaction with the systematicity of Fichte's philosophy is expressed, however, in light of the indubitable obligation that Jacobi—and all the early German Romantics—felt to Fichtean principles of science, to the indomitable practical will that towers at the origin of his doctrine, and to his descent into the conundrum of the dialectical principle of reality.[66]

The *Letter to Fichte* represents the center of the tension between two conceptions of thought whose conflicting paradigms grew stronger to each other's benefit: the more the Fichtean system of reason appeared as the ultimate, the stronger the Jacobian retaliation of individuality grew.

Jacobi's analysis of the concept of system appears right at the beginning of the Preface of the letter: "I am bound to be pleased with Kant that he preferred to sin against the system rather than against the majesty of the place."[67] In this context the term system refers to the notion of *system of reason*. This implies that the founding principle of science is formally homogeneous with the objects of that same science. As a consequence, the form of the objects of science is exactly the expression of the principle of science. A further explanation of the kind of systematic unity that Fichte's doctrine offers, according to Jacobi, can be obtained from the last edition of *Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Herr Moses Mendelssohn*, with particular reference to the section dedicated to the reply to M. Mendelssohn's *Memoranda*. In proposition *XXXIX,* Jacobi states: "All individual

Walter Jaeschke (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1993), 72-84. See also Klaus Hammacher, ed. "Fichte und Jacobi, Tagung der Internationalen J.G. Fichte-Gesellshcaft." Special Issue, *Fichte Studien*, no. 14 (1998).

[66] On the consonance of Fichte and Jacobi in their contrast against the Berliner *Aufklärer* in general, and Nicolai in particular see Stefan Schick, "Das Interesse der Aufklärung - Fichte, Jacobi und Nicolai im Disput über Bedingtheit und Unbebingtheit der Vernunft," *Fichte Studien*, no. 43 (2016), 106-127. On a more general overview on Fichte and early German Romanticism, see *Fichte, German Idealism, and Early Romanticism*, ed. Daniel Breazeale and Tom Rockmore (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

[67] *Letter to Fichte*, 499.

things mutually presuppose one another and refer to one another so that none of them can either be or be thought of without the rest, or the rest without it." The necessary conclusion arrives in proposition *XLI*: "The absolutely indivisible essence, in which all concepts exist together, is the infinite and absolute thought."

At first, this last reference to Spinoza can be seen as an unorthodox form of Fichte's doctrine of knowledge, which clearly promotes subjectivity as the origin and justification of every "individual thing." Yet in light of Fichte's success in deriving the whole reality from the activity of the I, Jacobi regards the comparison between Fichte's I and the Spinozist *natura* as thoroughly justified: "Little was lacking for this transfiguration of materialism into idealism to have already been realized through Spinoza. His substance, which underlies extended and thinking being, equally and inseparably binds them together; it is nothing but the invisible identity of object and subject (demonstrable only through inferences) upon which the system of the new philosophy is grounded, i.e. the system of *the autonomous philosophy of intelligence.*"[68] This new philosophy of intelligence shows a coherent development of Spinoza's materialism because what is *conceivable* appears according to the form of the *self-generation of a principle*. Both Spinoza's substance and Fichte's I imply that what really *is* is that which is conceived per se; everything else arises within this unity.[69] Yet the exposition of this thesis—that was to be discussed for years to come—is preparatory to the very heart of Jacobi's criticism.[70] In fact, the philosophical core of the *Letter* comes to light when Jacobi starts to assess the *completeness* of the science of knowledge.

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[68] *Letter to Fichte*, 502.

[69] On this see, George di Giovanni, "Introduction: The Unfinished Philosophy of Friedrich Henrich Jacobi," in Friedrich Henrich Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel* Allwill, ed. George di Giovanni (Montréal: McGill-Queen University Press, 2009), 70 and ff., as well as Walter Jaeschke, "Der Messias der spekulativen Vernunft," in *Fichtes Entlassung: der Atheismusstreit vor 200 Jahren*, ed. Klaus-M. Kodalle, Martin Ohst (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1999), 143-157 (pp. 149-150).

[70] We need to stress that Jacobi's first reaction to Fichte's *Über den Begriff der Wissenscahftslehre* is not negative under many respects, as showed in Jacobi's letter to Goethe dated June 7th, 1794, see Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 10 (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 2015), 361-363. Jacobi's criticism grows as soon as he realizes that according to Fichte's doctrine we understand only that which we do. See his letter to Dohm of December 12th, 1797, in Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 11 (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 2017), 265-267. Cf. Klaus Hammacher, *Die Philosophie F.H. Jacobis* (München: Fink, 1969), 180 and ff.

In accordance with its purity, science—namely, Fichte's philosophy—is "this very production *in thoughts*," "an inner activity" that "consists in the autonomous production of its object."[71] Science is complete because it translates what is other-than-itself into itself and makes the very possibility of otherness disappear. In other words, science concerns itself only with objects that its principle defines so that the products of science represent the only objects that should be regarded as knowable. As a result, everything that is conceived is known precisely because it is the product of that principle which makes everything conceivable.

The majesty of science is thus grounded on the production of both ethical and epistemological values, whose justification rejects any form of correspondence theory: there is not a world of facts or values to correspond to because everything is a product of the "intelligence" of the I. Consequently, Fichte's doctrine presents a magnificent achievement of abstract thinking: the principle of the Doctrine of Science - the I - defines lawfulness for ethics and truthfulness for epistemology. Fichte makes explicit the conversion from "form alone into the substance":[72] all that is, is posited by the I and what is not posited by the I, is not. The crucial *opus* of idealism consists in this transition, which replaces substance with form. Better than geometry and arithmetic, Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* shows the principle that stands for the "*element of unity* in all sciences," and that divests reality of its independence.

But, Jacobi maintains that a single crucial problem arises: the principle of science fashions concepts which lack the "true".[73] The purity of science depends on the fact that the truth lies in the science itself, whereas Jacobi is committed to showing that the foundation of all knowledge lies outside of both science and thinking in general. Put simply: Jacobi is committed to showing that an independent world of substances exists outside the perimeter of science. The real problem for Jacobi

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[71] *Letter to Fichte*, 505. See Klaus Hammacher, "Jacobis Brief "An Fichte" (1799)," in *Transzendentalphilosophie und Spekulation. Der Streit um die Gestalt einer Ersten Philosophie (1799–1807)*, ed. Walter Jaeschke (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1993), 77.
[72] *Letter to Fichte*, 504.
[73] On Jacobi's critique to Fichte in the *Kladden*, see Klaus Hammacher, *Die Philosophie F.H. Jacobis* (München: Fink, 1969), especially the third chapter.

will be defining a way of knowing this world without turning it into a mere product of science, as idealism does.

Despite his criticism, Jacobi assumes the definition of science that Fichte introduces: Jacobi admits that there cannot be scientific knowledge of substance because every element of science is a product of thought. Therefore, substance must be the object of a non-scientific knowledge; but this does not imply that the apprehension of substance falls into irrationalism. On the contrary, Jacobi aims to propose a theory of substance that should enrich our notion of rationality. The issues at stake are twofold: (A) the demonstration of the incompleteness of the abovementioned *philosophy of intelligence* and (B) the possibility that reason becomes the faculty to apprehend what is outside mere production of the I. Once we achieve these two goals, a new form of rationality would finally be within reach.

Jacobi's critique starts by affirming that the "being given" of an object represents the only access to science; if a "being" is not "given" to our understanding, then what we call "thing" is a mere product of the I, it is mere form (*Gestalt*). And *Gestalt* is nothing at all.[74]

In Jacobi's eyes, what makes Kant's philosophy as problematic as it is revelatory is the assumption that knowledge involves abstraction from a being that is not a product of our thought, but a "given." On the contrary, Fichte's Doctrine of Science annihilates that external-to-thought source of knowledge to the advantage of an abstract architecture of forms, which are intertwined, self-contained, and self-directed.[75] If Kant assumes that our knowledge refers to objects that lie outside of our thought, Fichte provides arguments to reject this thesis and build a system of mere *Gestalten*. The Fichtean science becomes the display of the power of the I to produce the truth and obliterates the "realm of Being."[76] This represents a momentous turn in the history of Western thought: the science of *truth* comes to oppose the knowledge of *Being*. Jacobi tries to debunk the "naked logical enthusiasm" that

[74] *Letter to Fichte*, 508.
[75] *Letter to Fichte*, 509-510.
[76] *Letter to Fichte*, 508.

turns perception of Being into "necessary imaging,"[77] but he can only witness this crucial turn of philosophy into sheer contemplation of the Self: once we accept that only logical explanations can contribute to the definition of objects, we have fallen victim to the logical enthusiasm that blinds our senses.

In the wake of the success of Fichte's system of knowledge, drama ensued: "I invoke Annihilation, like a divinity, against such a Danaidic, such an Ixionic bliss."[78] As mentioned above, despite the dramatic utterance Jacobi does not locate the knowledge of Being in an irrational realm, nor does he aim to give rise to a counter-Enlightenment movement of fideistic flavor. On the contrary, Jacobi appears committed to a critique of thinking in the same way as Kant devoted his efforts to a critique of reason.[79]

After his concise analysis of the consequences of Fichte's endeavor, Jacobi denounces the ultimate result of the Doctrine of Science, yet he emphasizes that Fichte's philosophy does not amount to atheism. Like arithmetic or geometry, Fichte's philosophy forgets Being and plays with images; in that realm of images, true God never disappears because he never came into being.[80]

What Fichte calls God in his essay *On the grounds of our belief in a divine government of the universe* is only a product of thinking. He posits that God is caused: it is a creation of the I - the *Gestalt* of the moral world - and therefore it is a non-entity. In the end, God becomes an icon of our actions. But still, states Jacobi, this is not atheism. Rather, it is the emergence of a phenomenon that will become crucial to the history of philosophy: nihilism. Contrary to what might be perceived, true

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77 *Letter to Fichte*, 510-511.
78 *Letter to Fichte*, 511.
79 Jacobi admired those *Aufklärer* such as Voltaire or Rousseau - see Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Werke*, vol. 1,1, *Ueber die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (Hamburg and Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Meiner and frommann-holzboog, 1998), 20 and 47. On the contrary, Woldemar sees in the *Auklärung des Verstandes* the stumbling block for a development of the healthy heart, healthy man, and healthy understanding. See Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Werke*, vol. 7,1, *Woldemar* (Hamburg and Stuttgart: Meiner and Frommann-Holzboog, 2007), 197. On this see Stefan Schick, "Die Vollendung des Deutschen Idealismus in Friedrich Heinrich Jacobis Sendschreiben an Fichte?," *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, no. 61 (2013), 21-41. Furhter reference may be found in Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Werke*, vol. 5, *Fliegende Blätter* (Hamburg and Stuttgart: Meiner and frommann-holzboog, 2007), 403.
80 *Letter to Fichte*, 512. The comparison of this quasi-arithmetical order with Fichte's doctrine closes the distance between Fichte and the Berliner *Aufklärer*, whose methodology - in the words of Mendelssohn's "Über die Frage: was heißt aufklären?" - reproduces the rules of arithmetic. In the same vein, the critique against the metaphysics that lies in natural theology is what connects Jacobi with Kant. On this theme is interesting the epistolary between Jacobi and Reinhold in 1799.

nihilism is a human project that creates a new God. This human creation implies the annihilation of true Being while it poses a major threat to the romantic age: the creation of a God that has no being.

The last few pages of the *Letter* are dedicated to defining this opposite to science, the realm of Being. Confronting the light of the science, Jacobi's exploration seeks Being where that light reduces its power and is shrouded by darkness. As Kant had summarized in his essay *What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking*: "through the mere concept, nothing is settled in respect of the existence of this object and its actual connection with the world (the sum total of all objects of possible existence). But now there enters *the right* of reason's *need*, as a subjective ground for presupposing and assuming something which reason may not presume to know through objective grounds; and consequently to orient itself in thinking, solely through reason's own need, in the immensurable space of the supersensible, which for us is filled with dark night."[81]

Advancing from where he left fifteen years before in the *Spinozabriefe* and hinting at Kant's systematic analysis of reason, Jacobi appeals to reason to assume and develop its proper function, which makes it the "faculty of presupposing the true."[82]

To be sure, Jacobi's motives and concern are consonant with a debate that involved other authors during the nineties of the 18th century like, for instance, the young Schelling and Fr. Schlegel, and that coagulated around the possibility to escape a nihilistic objectification of reality. While Schelling pursued this idea by following Fichte's project of countering the anti-foundationalist interpretation of Kant's transcendental philosophy and developed a systemic comprehension of the principle of reality (as it is evident ever since his *On the Possibility of a Form of Philosophy in General*, 1794), Fr. Schlegel felt the urgency of a revolution - a term that often appears in his writings of this period - based on untouched spiritual sources of human nature. Schlegel's as well as Novalis' philosophical studies might even be associated with Jacobi's inquiry

81 Immanuel Kant, "What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?," in *Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. Allen Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 10. See also Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 354 and ss.
82 See Birgit Sandkaulen, "Fürwahrhalten ohne Gründe. Eine Provokation philosophischen Denkens," *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 57, no. 2 (2009): 259-272.

into the danger of an all-positing I. In this regard it suffices to recall how Schlegel in his famous *On the study of Greek Poetry* (finished 1795, published 1797) theorizes the necessity to go past science and retrieve a "perfect intuition" that gives infinite content to an otherwise empty scientific law.[83] Nevertheless, contrary to Schlegel's confident cultural enterprise, Jacobi's metaphysical problem seems to capture the leaden atmosphere that subsequent history of philosophy will eventually betray. Jacobi's idea of reason - whose evolution cannot be treated here - unveils a noetic activity that, while being rational, is not discursive. As a consequence, Jacobi's notion of presupposing the true seems to stress a real problem of transcendental idealism.

The faculty of reason

In search of a more precise grasp of Jacobi's insight, we need to delve into his notion of reason as it appears in the *Letter*, and see in what sense he proclaimed that Kant committed a sin against system. In Jacobi's eyes 'sin' was committed not against but in compliance with the reason's own power, his account of reason - as it appears in the *Letter* - must be carefully reconstructed with some help from Kant's account. Surely, we cannot detail Kant's articulate notion of reason, but we can collect some introductory elements that will guide our understanding of Jacobi's trajectory.

On the one hand, Jacobi regards reason as the faculty of Being inasmuch as it perceives what is 'prior to' and 'outside' knowledge; therefore, reason is crucial to knowledge because it is concerned with what knowledge necessarily refers to. On the other hand, reason is also the faculty of systematic truth "endowed with *reflection* and *purpose*" that follows "regulative perception."[84] Jacobi seems to give two distinct assessments of reason: one concerns its capacity of perceiving what is outside knowledge, the other concerns its capacity of giving shape to knowledge. Nevertheless, these two aspects are discrete formulations of a dual function that reason singularly performs. This dual function,

[83] Cf. Friedrich Schlegel, *On the study of Greek poetry*, ed. Stuart Barnett (New York: SUNY Press, 2001), 47.
[84] *Letter to Fichte*, 514.

in fact, shows the real faculty of Being insofar as reason refers both to the supersensible and sensible levels. We believe that Jacobi alludes to the complex significance that the term "reason" assumes in Kant's lexicon and that Jacobi seems to inherit in light of his need to explain the connection between objective knowledge and true Being. We can lay out this legacy in a very general summary that points directly to the core of the theme, leaving aside an otherwise necessary exegesis of Kant's vocabulary.

To shed light on Jacobi's text, we need to remember that the aforementioned distinction between different formulations of the notion of reason relates it to some introductory notes of Kant's transcendental distinction between *logical* and *pure* use of reason. In its *logical* use, reason refers to the faculty of inference that abstracts from any content of knowledge, while in its *pure* use, it refers to itself as the origin of some transcendent principles, which at first Kant does not specify.

The *logical* use of reason gives a syllogistic order to knowledge without any addition in content. In fact, the *logical* use of reason pertains only to the form of knowledge: it gives systematicity to the whole body of propositions that knowledge collects. Through reason we produce the highest unity of knowledge from the manifold of cognition giving systematic unity to our apprehension of reality. The *logical* use of reason makes explicit the condition of the cognition and guides our thinking to define where the unconditioned - of the conditioned cognition - is to be sought.[85] By contrast, the *pure* use of reason provides the foundation for transcendent principles.[86] The *pure* use of reason entails a specific synthetic tendency to the unconditioned, where thought is independent of the empirical world. Assuming Jacobi's terminology: if the *logical* use of reason identifies how unconditioned being relates to scientific knowledge, the *purity* of reason identifies how Being should be defined according to this non-scientific knowledge. In fact, the *pure* use of reason refers to the ability to apprehend purely.

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85 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 391-392.
86 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 392.

On this account we maintain that reason is purely 'passive' only because it perceives the pure character of Being beyond reason's 'active' constitution of knowledge. From the point of view of the development of the critique of pure reason, this reflection on the system prepares the stage for the dialectic of reason, where Jacobi finds proof for the dependence of knowledge on what is extra-objective. Eventually, in this double function (logical and pure) of reason, Jacobi finds the very origin of the *Grenze* of the system of knowledge. Reason becomes the faculty that can disclose *Gestalt*'s dependence on Being.

The first disclosure of this dependence is showed in the paradigm of Jacobi's ontology: "my reason instinctively teaches me: God."[87] Against Fichte's legalistic morality, Jacobi opposes the intimation of the person of God. But nothing is settled: for only reason's need for God has raised its voice over thunderous nihilism. Now that the rationality of the need for Being has been intimated, Jacobi approaches the real problem for his epistemology: how to define Being? To this purpose, Jacobi adds further elements to his ontological inquiry, but this time he proceeds *via negativa*.

In the process of defining Being, he takes a polemical step that should clear away any doubts concerning a possible convergence between his idea of Being and Kant's postulates of practical reason.[88] In fact, he maintains that Kant's notion of moral law does not unfold one of the manifestations of true Being: a free man. Moral law is "barren, desolate and empty" and cannot fulfil the function of manifesting the essence of a free agent. In Jacobi's terminology, moral law cannot become the heart of a man.[89] In the end, Kant's and Fichte's moral agent does not belong to what Jacobi calls 'Being;' the moral agent is, in fact, contrary to Being. In the more emphatic terms that Jacobi employs, transcendental moral law generates the "utterly void," an infinite, lawful universe which promotes the "*nothing, the absolutely indeterminate.*"[90] Using Jacobi's words: that moral God

[87] *Letter to Fichte*, 515.
[88] This polemical step is indeed relevant for the development of Jacobi's non-philosophy, which will later feed off an exploration of Kant's theory of postulates. For the sake of brevity, we need to follow the restrictions set by the text and assess only this negative reference to that theory. Nevertheless, it cannot be stressed enough that Jacobi has the merit of pinpointing both positive and negative consequences of the ethic-ontological identity of God that emerges out of the post-Kantian era.
[89] *Letter to Fichte*, 517.
[90] *Letter to Fichte*, 519.

is a non-entity that produces non-entities. But such is the God of the worshipers of science, a God that rules over a world of "chemical, organic, and psychological, modes of production."[91]

Understanding a modal category

If we consider the inception of Romanticism to be shaped around the theoretical efforts of post-Kantian philosophies such as Reinhold's and Fichte's, one may consider 1799 as the year in which this philosophical initial phase of Romanticism begins to show its epilogue; but Jacobi's prophetic emphasis about the danger of a world of "production" conveys, even today, a concern that we should not comfortably dispel or store in the dusty shelves of the history of philosophy. Against this world of production Jacobi does not oppose pure contemplation to earn authentic access to Being; rather, he opposes a different ethics which unveils the true essence of it. In fact, in the *Letter*, Being is portrayed by means of a special kind of ethics: Jacobi portrays Being that is active, namely Being that *is* insofar as it *acts*. This trait is not uncommon among the romantics: the propulsion towards ethical or aesthetic activity in the pursuit of concrete, true life can easily be recognized in Hegel's early writings, in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, or in Novalis' poetry. And both Schlegel and Novalis, in their philosophical work, emphasize the centrality of moral and aesthetic agency. Jacobi, for his part, affirms that the homology between action and Being discloses the truth about the "heart of the man."

In order to have a better grasp of what this means, we need to look into how the difference between the activity of Being and the activity of the modes of production is articulated. The answer lies in methodology. Jacobi needs to build a theory of Being that should have a rational language beyond systematicity: the language of the theory of Being must not stem from a founding principle

[91] *Letter to Fichte*, 528.

like the Ficthean "I." To solve the *Rätsel des Seins* (the puzzle of Being), Jacobi promotes an ontology that moves polemically from the annihilation of Being operative in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, and focuses on the notion of action. But what kind of action?

We must concede that if Jacobi's *Letter* seems successful in presenting why reason is in *need* of Being, it remains quite vague when it comes to the understanding of Being. How can we look into Being? How does Being manifest itself? What is Being, if it is not a represented object, viz. an object of science? How does it act? These are the questions that Jacobi only partially answers in his text. Maybe, we can ask Kant for help in the same way Jacobi did when he turned to Kant's *The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God* to start his philosophical endeavor.

First, for Jacobi, Being entails existence: Being is not abstract or ideal; it is not subjective. Instead, Being is that which *exists*. Following Kant's teaching, Jacobi maintains that existence is not a predicate or a determination, it is rather an "absolute position," wholly simple.[92] In other words, existence cannot be produced but is given to experience before any determination or representation.[93] This makes existence congruent with the preeminent non-representational quality of Jacobi's notion of Being. But it is still not entirely clear how the relation between activity and existence should be defined.

A further determination of existence arises when we think that Being is not merely the possibility of a concept, but rather refers to substantive existence. In other terms - less abstract than the former - Being is not just what is or exists, for Being is the actual (*Wirklich*). This helps us formulate the next, more precise question: what is the special activity of the actual (*Wirklich)* that makes it be a non-object of our experience? What is the absolutely simple activity that, not listed among the modes of production, is the fundament of concrete existence?

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92 Immanuel Kant, "The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God," in Immanuel Kant, *Theoretical Philosophy 1755-1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 119-122.
93 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 297 and 324-325.

If we were to unravel the special activity of the actual (*Wirklich*) in Kantian terms, we should move into the realm of assertoric judgments that, according to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, are those by means of which the actual is defined. In the form of the assertoric judgment, thought must be seen neither as a function of understanding nor as a function of reason, but rather properly as a function of the "faculty of judgment."[94] According to the faculty of judgment, the truthfulness of a judgment is given - at origin - by sensibility. Hence, the activity of Being is not the activity of an abstract principle or a rule, but is closer to the activity of a perceivable element. Yet, this perceivable element is not an object of synthesis, otherwise - according to Jacobi's criticism - it would become a product of the I. A striking paradox arises: Being is unity without synthesis or, more precisely, Being is the absolute position of the actual (*Wirklich*) whose identity is maintained but not represented.

But how is this active unity possible without synthesis? No definitive answer comes from the *Letter*. Or, better said, the answer is not as clear as one would expect. If one considers Jacobi's text, the exertion in defining Being is unexpected, since the identity of Being looks very close to us, as it lies in the "heart of the man." Maybe Jacobi would endorse the first of Novalis' Hymns: "More heavenly than these flashing stars seem to us the infinite eyes which the Night has opened within us." The darkness of the night welcomes - as it happens in Kant's *What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking* - our attempts to grasp true existence, but those same eyes that Novalis sees in his heart, Jacobi has opened in his reason. As the poet continues: "They see further than the palest of those countless hosts; without need of the Light they penetrate the depths of a loving heart, a feat which fills a higher realm with unutterable delight."[95]

This exertion with the notion of actuality is not a surprise. Actuality is a category that belongs to modality and does not add anything to knowledge of the object. Kant says: "when I think a thing, through whichever and however many predicates I like (even in its thoroughgoing determination),

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[94] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 209-210.
[95] Novalis, *Hymns to the Night*, in *Hymns to the Night and Other Selected Writings* (New York, The liberal Art Press, 1960), 4.

not the least bit gets added to the thing when I posit in addition that this thing *is*. For otherwise what would exist would not be the same as what I had thought in my concept, but more than that, and I could not say that the very object of my concept exists."[96] With regard to the category of actuality, we find Jacobi in profound agreement with Kant: the actual is epistemologically 'transparent' to synthesis. Unity without synthesis implies that being refers to an aesthetic dimension that is not contained in the predicates of the objects; and yet Being pertains to the "given". Being must be thought of as existence; therefore, existence must be perceivable, active, absolutely simple, and non-synthetic.

Although it may look like a game of taxonomy, this brief examination of the outcome of Jacobi's *Letter to Fichte* through Kant's glossary is not peripheral to the question at hand. On the contrary, it helps us understand the care with which Jacobi chooses the characteristics of existence. He seems to draw those characteristics from the tradition of transcendental philosophy that he signally accepts. Certainly, this knowledge of existence is introduced only via "intimation." Jacobi himself admits that he provides a full elaboration of this "intimation" only in his essay *On Divine Things and their Revelation* (1811),[97] but the direction of Jacobi's trajectory has now become clear: existence is unity without synthesis, identity without discursive content. These are the traits that represent the basis of the *Wirklich* (active and true). Eventually, this peculiar definition of existence shows the traits of a *Person*, of the "I" before the "Thou."[98] A *person* cannot be known via synthesis because it is not a product of a scientific knowledge, nor can its identity be expressed via discursive explanation because it cannot be analyzed. And yet it is absolutely simple and given, and in need of a different lexicon to be discussed and determined.[99]

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[96] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 567-568 and 325-326.
[97] *Letter to Fichte*, 512 (footnote 6).
[98] *Letter to Fichte*, 524. In the work published in 1811 "On Divine Things and their Revelation" Jacobi defines a Person (*Mensch*) as an "incomparable" (*Unvergleichbares*), "one for itself." F.H. Jacobi, "Von den göttlichen Dinge und Ihrer Offenbarung," in F.H. Jacobi, *Werke*, Bd. 3, ed. Klaus Hammacher and Walter Jaeschke (Hamburg: Meiner, 2000), 26 (I thank Majk Feldmeier for pointing that out). This essay does only point to some transcendental elements being the source for the definition of concrete existence; it does not have the ambition to exhaust the topic, which would need to be analyzed according to the difference between human being and God with regard to freedom and time.
[99] Birgit Sandkaulen, "Daß, was oder wer? Jacobi im Diskurs über Personen," in *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi. Ein Wendepunkt der geistigen Bildung der Zeit*, ed. Walter Jaeschke and Birgit Sandkaulen (Hamburg: Meiner, 2004), 231. And Birgit Sandkaulen, "Ichheit und Person. Zur Aporie der Wissenschaftslehre in der Debatte zwischen Fichte und

The traits of a person appear surrounded by the Kantian "night," so it is fairly easy to imagine that Jacobi would be pleased by Novalis' verse: "I wake now, for I am thine and mine: thou hast proclaimed to me the Night as life and made me human."[100]

On death and dying

A different text may help us assess the mark impressed on our personal life by the progressive inability of science to speak the truth about Being. If Being reveals its true nature in the moment in which we assume that existence discriminates between a *person* and a represented object, then considering the limit of existence - its finitude - may help us progress in revealing the unchanging truth about Being. So far, we have seen that to think properly involves thinking about true Being, as if to say that a different object of thinking implies a different form of thinking. A specific dialogue by Plato connects the problem of finding the proper form of thinking with the definition of the proper object of thinking. Moreover, the same dialogue asserts that the true form of thinking emerges only when we interrogate ourselves about human existence. We could go even further and argue that Jacobi's critique of reason echoes Socrates' dissatisfaction with Anaxagoras' teaching, as it is portraited in Plato's *Phaedo.*[101] To be sure, it is not a surprise that we find aspects of Jacobi's concern in one of the most eminent discourses on transcendent forms of truth.

Jacobi," in *System und Systemkritik um 1800*, ed. Christian Danz and Jürgen Stolzenberg (Hamburg: Meiner, 2011), 50 and ss.

[100] Novalis, *Hymns to the Night*, in *Hymns to the Night and Other Selected Writings*, New York, The liberal Art Press, 1960, 4.

[101] Notably, in the second half of 18th century a point of reference for the interpretation of Plato's *Pheado* was M. Mendelssohn's *Phädon, or on the Immortality of the Soul*. Yet, the aim of this conclusive paragraph is quite different from a metaphysical inquiry into rational psychology. Although Jacobi's *Letter to Fichte* might partially be read as a discourse about the soul, our final digression on the similarity between the *Letter* and Plato's dialogue wishes to stress Jacobi's effort to explain the function that the faculty of reason fulfils in our perception of the true. On a general understanding of a Platonic subtext of Jacobi's works, see the recent P.J. Brunel, *De Protée à Poliphème. Les Lumières platoniciennes de Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi* (Paris: PUPS, 2014).

Both Plato's and Jacobi's critiques of systematic thinking aim to acquire an access to truth that does not rely on discursive description of the composition of truth, rather they both provide access to truth by means of unveiling its principle. Notwithstanding the many differences, they both intend to save human personality from its dissolution at the hands of a lawful oppression. They both give to life - the special activity that we are - the quality of stolid defiance against the petitions of lawful thinking. But how does this activity manifest itself when systematic thinking seems to reduce the true to silence? The solution emerges when ruin hits. The personal tragedy Socrates is suffering in the dialogue mirrors the struggle that thinking endures when it is asked to define its own nature: in that moment, thinking is deprived of any firm supports and holds itself only on its motility. As in the case of Jacobi's *Letter*, the meaning of existence manifests itself only when the thinking confronts its hesitation to define the distinct motility (*Wirklichkeit*) that existence is.

In the case of the *Phaedo*, the idea of dying invades the dominion of our identity with imperative potency. Death inspires decisions, motivates attitudes, and influences both the evolution and manifestation of our character. On the contrary, birth does not exercise the same leverage on our moral life; it merely shows a commencement without conscious content, it is a bare yet-to-be. But, notwithstanding death's potency upon our moral identity, one aspect of our identity may partially divest death of its authority. In opposition to the mortality of our body, it seems that our theoretical achievements are not destined to die with us. The finitude of our existence seems to contrast with our connection to true knowledge, which aims to be universal not only because it evades solipsistic fixation to become the universal language, but also because it claims to be untouched by the burden of dissolution. In other words: what is true, is true forever. This continuity appears to be fundamental to rational beings because it defines their rational nature; nevertheless, the very act of bearing forms of true knowledge seems to disregard the end of their bearer's existence. It appears that only in the name of this rational faculty, can humans be likened to a bridge between two worlds, the mortal and the immortal.

Contrary to the common view, existence does not deny the human connection to the eternal. Plato suggests that the foundation of our connection to true forms explicitly refers to and emerges out of the question about existence. The famous outset of the theory of the ideas in Plato's *Phaedo* springs from his efforts to explain the essence of existence. While describing his first wandering in search of the truth, Socrates' admits a bitter discontent with Anaxagoras' philosophy: his early esteem of Anaxagoras' systematic approach to the question about "why one or anything else is generated or destroyed or is at all" turns into suspect and criticism against the method that Anaxagoras adopts to investigate existence.[102] Before introducing the need for a theory of forms, Socrates appears satisfied with Anaxagoras teaching that the mind is the true cause of existence, only to discover afterward that Anaxagoras explains actions and events without any mention of their cause but only by reference to the corporeal elements of those same items. To explain existence, maintains Socrates, we must differentiate between cause of a thing and its composition: only the former, the cause, expresses the reason of the motility in which existence consists.[103] Instead of turning towards the conditions of material existence, Socrates looks at the ideas as a way to understand the "workings" in which existence consists.[104] Ideas are principles of explanation that appears to be the strongest as they refer not to the condition or composition of a certain thing, but to the proper essence of the thing, which defines the cause of its existence.[105] Contrary to the composition of the thing, its essence is grasped 'aute kath auten,'[106] by means of itself: the coming to be, ceasing to be, and existing in general are known directly through the simple apprehension of the special activity, the motility, that existence is.[107] Thus, Socrates suggests, if we want to know existence in general, we have to be careful not to mix the principle of a thing with its composition, which is the usual mistake that the *antilogikoi* make when they confuse the knowledge of a principle with the knowledge of its consequences.[108]

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102 Plato, "Phaedo," in Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John J. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 85.
103 Plato, "Phaedo," in Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John J. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 85.
104 Plato, "Phaedo," in Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John J. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 86.
105 Plato, "Phaedo," in Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John J. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 87-88.
106 Plato, "Phaedo," in Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John J. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 57.
107 Plato, "Phaedo," in Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John J. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 86.
108 Plato, "Phaedo," in Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John J. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 87.

In the end, the *logos* does not spell out reality piece by piece in search of the complete chain of conditions that bring about objects, but makes explicit the form of existence, which lies in the special activity that those objects are. This explanation does not fall prey to dissolution; rather, it remains unaltered in the dimension of thought in virtue of its unconditional nature. In that very dimension of pure thinking, the special activity that we are is the only thing that withstands a vanishing world trapped in a restless dialectic of negating-and-determining.

As in the case of Jacobi's criticism of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, the direct vision of the thing in itself entails directing our attention toward true knowledge. But since knowledge can take many forms, we need to pay attention to the principle of it: if the principle does not yield 'aute kath auten,' it means that we compute composition, condition, or material content of things - but not their essence. Only when we look at what defines the existence of things do we evade the grasp of what is corruptible and conditional to see the unconditional nature. The preeminence of the principle of existence over other principles of knowing turns Jacobi's theory of personhood into a general methodology of knowledge, which oversees different kinds of knowledge, none of which pertains to Being, except his special ethics.

Conceptual Analysis of the *Divine Things*. A View from Within.

Lexical and Theoretical Structure of the Text.

Prophecy

From its outset, the *Divine Things* proves to be inspired by Jacobi's conscious siding with a party involved in a dispute that plagued the closing of the 18th century. A political and philosophical movement that was growing in popularity was aiming to cleanse the philosophical, political, and cultural spheres of religious delusions. From the beginning of the text Jacobi employs his usual strategy of targeting a polemical thesis in order to define his own position. He opens the *Divine Things* with a prophecy made by Lichtenberg about a future embodying the opposite of what he hopes and presenting the fulfilment of what he fears. Lichtenberg's prognostication reads as follows: "**Our world will become so refined (*fein*) that it will be as ridiculous to believe in God**, as it is today to believe in ghosts."[109]

Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (1742-1799), mathematician and physicist, while teaching at the University of Göttingen became quite known for his contributions to the debate on religious thought.[110] Jacobi locates this prophecy in clear contrast to the motto by J. von Müller with which he defines the general stance of his text: "there are unreceptive times, but what is eternal always finds its time."[111] This contraposition is further enriched by one more quotation which conclude our first inspection of the general trajectory of *Divine Things*. Müller's pronouncement somehow echoes the deeply felt urgency that the excerpt taken from Pascal's *Pensées* and placed as an epigraph to the Foreword. Pascal's words shed light on one - not the most relevant - textual source of the expression "divine things," and suggests the priority of their acquisition over the knowledge that we may have of them. The excerpt is a paragraph form Pascal's *Art of Persuasion* that has been quoted by Jacobi

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[109] F.H. Jacobi, *On Divine Things and their Revelation*, translation by P. Livieri, current part 1 of this Dissertation (henceforth, F.H. Jacobi, *On Divine Things*, followed by page number), 1.

[110] Lichtenberg was renowned as religious thinker and critic mainly for his contributions to both the *Göttinger Taschen Calender*, of which he was editor since 1778, and the *Göttingeschen Magazin der Wissenschaften und Litterature*, that he founded in 1779 together with G. Foster (the first issue was published in 1780). At his death he left a great number of aphorisms, excerpts, notes published between 1800 and 1806 in nine volumes under the title *Vermischte Schriften*. Jacobi refers to the abovementioned aphorism that was included in the first volume (166). For a comprehensive portray of both Lichtenberg and his position within the religious turmoil of the end of 18th-century please see G. Sautermeister, *Georg Christoph Lichtenberg* (München: C.H. Beck, 1993) and A. Beutel, *Lichtenberg und die Religion* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1995), and also R.W. Buechler, *Science, Satire, and Wit. The Essays of Georg Christoph Lichtenberg* (New York: Lang, 1990).

[111] F.H. Jacobi, *On Divine Things*, 1.

as follows: "Divine things (*vérités divines*) are infinitely superior to nature; only God can put them into the soul (*l'ame*). He wanted them to enter from the heart into the mind (*l'esprit*), and not from the mind into the heart. Hence, if human matters (*choses humaines*) have to be known before they can be loved, you have to love divine matters (*choses divines*) in order to know them."

Therefore, as it is made clear from the beginning, the immediate cognition (love) of divine things is the first knowledge we have. Both Jacobi's paraphrase of Pascal and von Müller's motto constitute the true point of departure of Jacobi's treatise inasmuch as they dispute Lichtenberg's prophecy, which is instead taken as an illustration of the intellectual atrophy of Jacobi's times.

And yet, this admired aphorist, while foreseeing the disappearance of religious ghosts, also predicts a final spiritual revolution. The prophecy continues by saying that at "**the highest summit of refinement[,] [...] [o]nce the peak is reached, the judgement of the wise men will overturn once again**".[112] Jacobi would unquestionably support this overturning: it represents a sudden cultural subversion in the direction of a religious renaissance in the moment refined thinking seems to obliterate even the absence of God.[113] Jacobi is convinced that the discovery of a personal God awaits at the final stage of the refinement of humankind, and that theism reveals its true nature only in the moment humankind accomplishes a definition of reality that disposes of God. For this reason, he embarks on the investigation of this eradication, whose structure and design would reveal the alternative: either God or nothingness. Jacobi concludes later in the text: "Man has only one alternative: either he derives from **one**, or he derives from **nothing**. We put the **one** before the nothing, and we name it **God** because this **one** (*Ein*) must necessarily be a personal one (*Einer*), otherwise it would be the same universal nothing but differently named".[114]

Jacobi does not approach theism via a positive understanding of it; rather, he approximates the intrinsic value and consequences of theism via a thorough analysis of what the denial of theism

112 F.H. Jacobi, *On Divine Things*, 5.
113 G. Wenz, *Von den göttlichen Dingen und ihrer Offenbarung. Zum Streit Jacobis mit Schelling 1811/12* (München: Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2001), 21.
114 F.H. Jacobi, *On Divine Things*, 23.

entails. Though Lichtenberg's concern mainly alludes to political and institutional disputes, the magnitude of the final revolution that Jacobi hopes for is not historical in a strict sense. Instead, the revolution is spiritual, as it is foretold by Pascal's lines quoted at the beginning of the book. By virtue of a reference to the postulation of the immediate certainty of those divine truths, that concise excerpt from Pascal's *Pensées* discloses the internal source that the knowledge of divine truths implies. In that realm of postulation, reason does not produce ladders of reasoning that pave our progressive and argumentative access to knowledge, because reason merely perceives what arguments presuppose. Jacobi understands this realm to be the central idea of his philosophy, whose engine works on the basis of a dichotomy.

To be sure, at the beginning of the *Divine Things* Jacobi does not resolve his conflict with "refined men" by introducing the whole case in support of his thesis. Instead, his addressing the personal God appears frozen in an alternative: either theism or naturalism. For the time being, this dilemma gives Jacobi the opportunity to express the nature of his siding with theism: it gains strength and definition only insofar as its immediate evidence matures by means of an unbroken confrontation with naturalism. As we will see more adequately in the next pages, Jacobi seems to state that if theism is the only way to give concrete existence to reality, naturalism yields a system of knowledge that appeals to our thirst for a justified grasp of reality. Jacobi does not treat naturalism as if it were an alien curse against religious feeling, for in his opinion naturalism brings to expression our rational need to have justifications in support of our knowledge. No doubt that his theism intends to meet the same rational request of a justified cognition but - as we will see - theism springs from a different foundation.

The first step that Jacobi takes aims to illustrate the evidence of theism by showing how theism is consubstantial with human essence. The second step gives Jacobi room to lay out the contours of theism; for this last purpose, Jacobi does not try to justify theism with a full account of its logical principles, for such an account would prove that even the existence of a personal God rests on principles that are not as such God. On the contrary, after having showed the human innate access to

theism, Jacobi displays the nebulous and even contradictory character of naturalism, which makes theism the only consistent epistemology. As a consequence, theism stands as the only way to save the being of both humans and the world.

Therefore, the entire first part of the *Divine Things* provides the anatomy of the "heart" mentioned by Pascal, and unravels the dichotomy between the knowledge of the eternal truths that theism secures and the knowledge of naturalism, so as finally to bring the reader to the point of contact between these two alternatives that do not consent to dialectic.

From the line that bridges the two above mentioned passages - Lichtenberg's prophecy and Jacobi's *aut-aut* - we can certainly assume that Jacobi's argument orbits around this alternative; but we also must bear in mind that on the basis of the problem about the form of our knowledge (either theism or naturalism) lies the metaphysical problem of the justification of existence.

The *Divine Things* makes of existence its real subject and gives meaning to Jacobi's dissection of the problem of the two kinds of deduction of existence that theism and naturalism respectively display: from one or from nothing.[115] In order to understand properly the reach of his *aut-aut*, we need to look at another opening quotation, which inaugurates his most famous book, published in 1785: *Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Herr Moses Mendelssohn*. After the Prefatory Note, Jacobi quotes Plato, *Letter II*, "[...] It is in relation to the king of all and on his account that everything exists, and that fact is the cause of all that is beautiful."[116] The *Spinoza Letters* are in perfect consonance with the opening scene of the *Divine Things*: they both set the stage for the

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115 From these first introductory notes of the *Divine Things*, Jacobi does not seem in favor of a distinction between knowledge of the absolute and knowledge of the world, like D. Henrich implies in his "Der Ursprung der Doppelphilosophie. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobis Bedeutung für das nachkantische Denken," *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, Präsident der Akademie, Philosoph, Theoretiker der Sprache. Vorträge auf einer Gedenkveranstaltung der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 250 Jahre nach seiner Geburt*, (Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1993), 13-27, especially 17. Jacobi is instead involved in the scrutiny of thinking in general, both of the world and of God, and his thesis tries to make explicit the ties that connect knowledge of God and proper knowledge of worldly reality, while discarding any theory of systematic thinking that abstains from the idea of an absolute beginning of things. See on this theme in B. Sandkaulen, "'Ich bin und es sind Dinge außer mir'. Jacobis Realismus und die Überwindung des Bewusstseinsparadigmas," *Internationales Jahrbuch des Deutschen Idealismus* 11, (2016): 169-196.

116 F.H. Jacobi, "Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Herr Moses Mendelssohn," *F.H Jacobi: The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel* Allwill, ed. G. di Giovanni (Montréal&Kingston: McGill-Queen, 2009), 179 (henceforth, F.H. Jacobi, *Spinoza Letters*, followed by page number).

upcoming considerations by alluding to the justification of existence: "God," "the king of all," the "one." At first glance it all appears to concern theology only, but Jacobi uses this religious configuration as the frame for the formulate the general understanding of his theory of existence. Both Lichtenberg's prophecy (along with Jacobi's resulting *aut-aut*) and Plato's quotation point to making explicit what existence is and how the identity of existing things is defined. Existence seems to be the main subject matter of Jacobi's investigations, but this subject matter opens a panorama of questions that impact the religious field while defining by the same token the empirical world.[117]

After the *Spinoza Letters* attempted to reveal the true atheistic nature of systematic philosophy, and after Lichtenberg's prophecy presented atheistic naturalism as the form of the mature age of humanity, one may understand how in the *Divine Things* Jacobi reckons that Lichtenberg was just describing a reality that he himself saw emerging in front of his eyes at the time of the *Pantheismusstreit*. The action of banning the external being that acts as intelligent creator of all is not different from what transcendental idealism (in all its fashions) has done. According to idealism, explanations, reasons, and justifications are to be found only within represented reality because rationality consists in a coherent, closed system of phenomena whose principle is the system itself. At the moment subjectivity has completely expounded the system of representations, it has also manifested its laws making of the world its (subjectivity's) own image. Nothing seems to exceed the boundaries of this whole because idealism makes external interferences on the system inconceivable or, according to Lichtenberg's terminology, mere ghosts.

A last passage from the *Spinoza Letters* can conclude this preliminary immersion into the more mature text here in question. An evident allusion to the immediate certainty that, according to Pascal, is implanted in our "heart" and shapes the knowledge of the *vérités divines* catches our attention. Jacobi writes in the *Spinoza Letters* that "[...] *man can only come to the knowledge that is above this world through a disposition that is above this world, that God announces himself to our*

117 On the function of the notion of existence in Jacobi's intellectual evolution see E. Pistilli, *Tra dogmatismo e scetticismo. Fonti e genesi della filosofia di F. H. Jacobi* (Pisa-Roma: Serra editore, 2008).

hearts but hides himself from those who seek him by the understanding alone [...]."[118] Undeniably, as far back as 1785, Jacobi located the *vérités divines* in the heart of man and resolved to unearth the inconsistency of systematic knowledge represented by Spinozism. In the *Divine Things*, 25 years after assuming this resolution, Jacobi eventually embarked on the project to expose that same heart, but this time he is no longer interested in battling against one of the many forms that naturalism takes. Rather, in the *Divine Things* Jacobi wants to reveal the source of theism and make explicit that, once the nature of man has been defined, theism will reveal itself as a surprisingly justified system.

Contrary to the common, politically correct opinion that establishes a strict distinction between religion and science, Jacobi observes that the rejection of a personal, living God inevitably impacts the sciences. In fact, a coherent understanding of the scientific attitude that rejects a personal, living God provokes a drift of the whole scientific knowledge, because the personal, living God - following Jacobi's preliminary notes – constitutes the conceptual key for a different kind of conceivability.[119] As said above, if existence is the primary subject matter of this text, its conceivability and the nature of thinking in general is the main problem that Jacobi tackles right from the beginning.

Contrary to what might appear after reading the first lines of Jacobi's *Divine Things*, we will see that Jacobi is not trying to restore a reactionary control of religion over scientific thinking. His move is subtler. AJesuitical control of religious concern over free science is not Jacobi's preoccupation, for the very notion of control is the brainchild of those refined minds that aim to expand their monopoly over every aspect of reality, religion included.

It is not a coincidence that no other concept suffers the consequences of a refined clean censorship like the notion of spirit (*Geist*), because Jacobi assumes that it is through a non-discursive power of thinking that spiritual reality is known.[120] In the same fashion, in the *Spinoza Letters* Jacobi draws attention to the same topic by quoting Herder and making Herder's words about the clear sight

[118] F.H. Jacobi, *Spinoza Letters*, 242.
[119] F.H. Jacobi, *On Divine Things*, 6.
[120] F.H. Jacobi, *On Divine Things*, 6.

of the true his own. The expression "clear sight" retains a certain halo of immediacy for it does away with reasoning. Jacobi equates the Greek *daimon* with the Christian "clear eye" that dwells in our heart: "We have a friend in us - a delicate sanctuary in our soul, where God's voice and intention has long since resounded, sharp and clear. The ancients called it the *daimon*, the *good genius* of man, whom they revered with so much youthful love, and obeyed with so much respect. This is what Christ meant by the *clear eye* that is the light of life and enlightens the entire body. David asks for it in prayer, as the *Spirit of Life* that leads him on the straight and level path, etc. Let's call it *conscience*, *inner sense*, *reason*, the *logos* in us, or what you will."[121] Jacobi used and uses other terms in different works, but all converge to mean the same thing: the "reason [*Vernunft*] of man's spirit," the place where God reveals himself.[122]

Needless to say, this is just a very general picture: Jacobi's own idea of immediacy confronts the opposite refined paradigm of scientific knowledge in a way that is so sketchy as to be even pedestrian. But this commonplace hides a question that haunted even Kant, who in his *What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?* refers to that "immeasurable space," "the dark night," that embodies the projection of reason's own need. The "immeasurable space" might be dark in Kant's view, but definitely not empty, as Kant himself famously stresses while pointing at what comes into view in that dark. Kant calls it the transcendental illusion of reason that "take[s] a subjective necessity of a connection of our concepts…for an objective necessity in the determination of things in themselves".[123]

Jacobi does not fear to bring his reader with him to that place. As early as the introductory pages of the *Divine Things*, he risks encountering ghosts and the danger of illusions. In fact, he brings to conclusion the introduction of the several issues treated in the *Divine Things* by formulating a doubt, which represents the same philosophical peak that inspired modern thinking from the very

121 F.H. Jacobi, *Spinoza Letters*, 247-248.
122 F.H. Jacobi, *On Divine Things*, 6.
123 I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 386.

beginning of its history, and that now captures the theoretical dimension of Jacobi's final efforts. Jacobi writes: "If this living God becomes in man's view a mere rainbow, so that among the clouds of the human soul it manifests itself through **refraction** and **collection**; if man learns to consider him a psychological deception, akin to that optical deceit, then his entire knowledge has actually taken the same course and will always have to be further transfigured [...]."[124]

Jacobi faces a problem that modern thinking has turned into a faithful companion. Likely, this problem, in the form of a skeptical stance, is what made him write so extensively on the nature and power of revelation. Thus, before introducing the power of revelation, Jacobi alludes to the question: is this *good genius*, this spiritual essence of human reason a mere delusion? Is it, instead of providing guidance and salvation, a mere sophistical voice that drives us away from the truth towards products of our desires and delusions? Undoubtedly, this skeptical voice is present in Jacobi, but, is this skepticism just a sediment of centuries of false reasoning?[125]

One could almost say that Jacobi's metaphysical interest in the definition of existence brings the narrative of the *Divine Things* back to the foundation of modernity. Indeed, Jacobi asks the same fundamental questions that his predecessor, Descartes, confronted in the second of his *Meditations*: "But there is a deceiver of supreme power and cunning who is deliberately and constantly deceiving me. In that case I too undoubtedly exist, if he is deceiving me; and let him deceive me as much as he can, he will never bring it about that I am nothing so long as I think that I am something. So after considering everything very thoroughly, I must finally conclude that this proposition, *I am*, *I exist*, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind."[126] In fact, the history of modern thinking reaches an unexpected turn in the first pages of the *Divine Things*, where Jacobi proves to be a categorically modern thinker with a definite idea about the foundation of knowledge. Jacobi's own version of methodic doubt serves his purpose of displaying his own interpretation of

124 F.H. Jacobi, *On Divine Things*, 6.
125 F.H. Jacobi, *On Divine Things*, 6.
126 R. Descartes, *Meditations* 2, in *Oeuvres de Descartes*, ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (Paris: Vrin, 1904), vol. 7, 25.

modern self-criticism, because methodic doubt brings the dispute between naturalism and Jacobi's theory of thought to their common ground, the foundation of knowledge, which casts on the divinity of things the proper transcendental light. Jacobi discusses the conceivability of divine things not independently of humans' rational faculties but on the ground of rational nature. The modernity of Jacobi's attitude is evident in the fact that his strategy is not that which purports to be an immediate ascent to God's point of view or a personal revelation restricted to a specific doctrine. Jacobi's philosophy does not forfeit the human to vaunt immediate divine cognition, for it conforms with an inquiry into the human possibilities of apprehending. As Jacobi already expounded in the dialogue *David Hume*, his realism is based on an inquiry about the foundation of knowledge whose reach is not simply that of an empirical realism. Rational capacity to apprehend is not limited to the capacity to know physical reality: "the perfection of sensation determines the perfection of consciousness *with all its modifications*. As is receptivity, so is spontaneity; as the sensibility, so the understanding. The degree of our faculty for distinguishing ourselves from external things, extensively and intensively, is the degree of our personality, that is, the degree *of elevation of our spirit*. Along with this exquisite property of reason, we receive the *intimation of God*, the intimation of HE WHO IS, of a being *who has its life in itself*."[127]

As is now clear, man apprehends reality around himself with the same degree of certainty as he apprehends the reality of God. Therefore, it seems that Jacobi's realism is based on a threefold connection that relates the existence of a physical reality with the existence of the supreme agent and the existence of the I. Unlike Descartes', Jacobi's foundationalism is based not on the certainty of the existence of the I, but on a different evidence, that affirms the existence of the I in the same moment as it affirms the existence of "Thou," be it physical reality or God. As he maintains: "[t]hat is the

[127] F.H. Jacobi, "David Hume on Faith, or Idealism and Realism," *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. G. di Giovanni (Montréal&Kingston: McGill-Queen, 2009), 329 (henceforth, *David Hume* followed by page number).

reason of man's spirit: reason makes manifest to him that the existence (*Daseyn*) of a God is more evident and certain than its own. Reason is not, where this revelation is not."[128]

In light of Jacobi's ideas about the immediate certainty of this threefold reality, the implications of his specific version of methodical doubt are pivotal in building the notion of reason and the ensuing necessity of revelation. We can further explore the problem of certainty as it appears in the first pages of the *Divine Things* with the help of Agrippa's trilemma.[129]

Traditionally, Agrippa's trilemma states that the foundation of knowledge is impossible. If we search for the reason of something, what we assume as reason will eventually present the same problem, to be given a reason. This way, we fall in an infinite regress. To tackle this regress, we have only three strategies (hence the trilemma): 1. we either keep going back finding reasons forever, 2. or we locate a proposition that does not require reasons, 3. or we assume that the last reason represents its own foundation. Jacobi's project is to escape the dilemma[130] by abandoning altogether the idea that both Agrippa's trilemma and its responses assume: the idea that the principle of reason provides explanatory conditions of existence.

Indeed, what the *Divine Things* presents is a more sophisticated analysis of the potential of this simple idea, which the *David Hume* did not elaborate thoroughly. In fact, on one side the *David Hume* provides the correct framework for understanding the notion of "revelation," but on the other side it does not present the full potential of the faculty of perception that human reason is. While the *David Hume* unravels the problems arising in the epistemology of finite things and discusses the foundation of knowledge from the point of view of consciousness, the *Divine Things* provides a proper understanding of Jacobi's general epistemology because it places epistemology within a broader metaphysical project. As a consequence, the *Divine Things* eventually elaborates both the

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128 F.H. Jacobi, *On Divine Things*, 6.

129 In his book, *All or Nothing. Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments, and Skepticism in German Idealism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), Paul Franks has framed convincingly the problem of the foundation of knowledge according to a critical view of the relation between systematicity and skepticism, and has placed Jacobi's efforts within this problem.

130 On the horror of infinite regress, see F.H. Jacobi, *Spinoza Letters*, 373.

metaphysical significance of the notion of revelation that the *David Hume* merely introduced, while remaining committed to the epistemological coordinates set in the dialogue.

In any event, the relevance of the dialogue for the interpretation of the *Divine Things* cannot be overestimated. In fact, as the dialogue reports, revelation is a common German word: "[w]e ordinarily say in German that objects *reveal* themselves to us through the senses [...]".[131] In the same way, we can say that my own existence revels itself to me because "I experience that I am, and that there is something outside me, in one and the same indivisible moment; and at that moment my soul is no more passive with respect to the object than it is towards itself. There is no representation, no inference, that mediates this twofold revelation".[132]

Revelation is a word that brings our inquiry into the realm of a notion of thinking that supersedes the difficult and uncertain dialectic of consciousness. In the *Divine Things* Jacobi seems to say that thinking is different than consciousness, and that thinking is the new object that we need to explore to bring to completion the oeuvre that Kant started 30 years before.

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As we will see more clearly in the final chapter, the notion of revelation corresponds to the human aspiration to know what is higher than man himself.[133] Yet this higher matter is not subject to a transcendent horizon. We might say that what is higher than man is the true nature of reality that man's thinking is part of. With a reference to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Jacobi starts this inquiry into the limits and potential of rationality with an anthropological note. This seems to draw on the conclusion of the *David Hume* by addressing the ontological scope of Jacobi's investigation of man's heart. As the *David Hume* closes, so the *Divine Things* opens: "Man finds himself as a being

131 F.H. Jacobi, *David Hume*, 272.
132 F.H. Jacobi, *David Hume*, 277.
133 F.H. Jacobi, *Devine Things*, 6.

completely dependent, derived, concealed to himself: yet, he is enlivened by an impulse to inquire into his origin, to recognize himself in it, to experience **the true through** it, **from** it, and **of** it. He calls **reason** this impulse that sets apart his genus."[134]

To be human is to be rational, affirms Jacobi, echoing a long-standing equation. However, reason is neither a faculty of thinking nor merely an activity that deals with a specific object; it is rather an impulse (*Trieb*), and this impulse allows us to supersede - and therefore solve - methodical doubt. The notion of *Trieb* has a long history in Jacobi's writings, and shows that Jacobi's epistemology is actually grounded on his ideas on the ethical nature of man. In fact, Jacobi draws on Aristotle already in the *Woldemar* to make explicit the essence of the notion of *Trieb*, which is the underlying concept of his ethics of virtue.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the ethical impulse is a disposition (*héxis, habitus*) to defining the righteous mean, and it is with the notion of disposition in mind that Jacobi starts assembling the notion of the immediate apprehension of the true.[135] In the *Woldemar*, Jacobi refers to Aristotle to define what he also calls the "Instinkt des Menschen": *Trieb* is an impulse that constitutes the rational nature of man. This impulse is not part of consciousness, for it is blind to experience; rather, it precedes all experience and it makes man comprehend the definition of being.[136]

In clearer terms, we need to remember that according to Aristotle a good action is not defined per se but it is labeled in compliance with the moral nature of the man that performs it; in the same vein, Jacobi's conception of rationality is not a faculty among others, instead it is the very activity of the "fundamental impulse" (*Grundtrieb*), which defines the rational animal only when man knows his dependency on his origin. The impulse is not a faculty to see distinct objects, it is rather a way of seeing. Therefore, the rational identity of man is not granted by default, for man's ontological status

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134 F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 6-7.

135 On this see J. Stolzenberg, "Was ist Freiheit? Jacobis Kritik der Moralphilosophie Kants," in *Wendepunkt der geistigen Bildung der Zeit*, ed. Walter Jaeschke and B. Sandkaulen (Hamburg: Meiner, 2004) 19-36; and M. Ivaldo, "Jacobi, Kant (e Aristotele) sulla virtù," in *Jacobi in Discussione*, ed. Tristana Dini and Salvatore Principe (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2012) 47-64.

136 Cf. F.H. Jacobi, "Woldemar (1796)," in F.H. Jacobi, *Werke - Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Klaus Hammacher and Walter Jaeschke (henceforth, JWA), vol. 7, 249-250.

is acquired only through a proper rational activity that is activated through conscious exercise. The objects that this impulse deals with might appear to be the same as those involved in apprehension through phenomenal consciousness, but the attitude of the subject is different.

A different but consonant reference to Aristotle in the *Divine Things* provides a further qualification of this impulse. The impulse defines man's "being" as it shows "the privilege of man" which "consists—says the wise man from Stagira—in being able to know something higher and better than him."[137] This rational impulse makes man discover his epistemological dependency (he must acquire from an existing world outside himself what can be known), his ontological dependency (he has been created like all other existent things), as well as his moral dependency (while being responsible for his actions, he is not the author of the definition of good or bad). If on one hand the notion of dependency is deeply-rooted in man's being, on the other hand this human impulse toward 'the higher and better' does not take the shape of a mere subjective need. As is well represented in the destiny of the eponymous character of Jacobi's first novel, *Allwill*, Jacobi shows how the notion of this immediate moral impulse - that we can also call *Gewissheit* - could dangerously turn the Aristotelian immediacy of the virtuous act into the constructive self-sufficiency of the moral genius. But the moral genius is the figure that errs precisely in considering himself the author and lone bearer of virtue, inasmuch as his impulse is only defined according to his need. By considering himself the Alpha and the Omega of virtue, Allwill commits a moral suicide in light of his forfeiting the epistemological dependency on the real source of the true, the good, and the beautiful: God. In the end, if rational impulse is turned into mere rational need, nihilism appears on the stage of human self-knowledge.

As soon as Allwill renounces the epistemological dependency and makes of himself the author of any definition, he turns into a moral nihilist, as R. Lauth has sufficiently proven.[138] Therefore, the *Grundtrieb* - while being rooted in the very identity of man - should be assumed in its moral as well

137 F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 6.
138 R. Lauth, "Friedrich Heinrich Jacobis Allwill und Fedor Michajlovič Dostoevskijs Dämonen." *Russian Literature* 2, no. 2 (1973), 51-64.

as it its epistemological value: the impulse of having an innate moral virtue articulates the epistemological dependency on the higher source of the true. As Jacobi maintains: "the impulse of every living being is the **light** of this being, it is its right and strength. Only in this **light** can it walk, and it can be active **only** out of this strength. Every finite being owns within itself neither its life nor the source of the **force** of its heart, it is not the **flame** of its light. All beings are brought to life and revived by something **other than themselves**".[139]

The existential dependency should not lead us astray, for the existential dependency provides only the foundation of our epistemological nature that looks for the higher truth that is concealed in our own nature. In fact, Jacobi continues: "As the concealed and invisible soul is made **visible** through the face of man, so the speech and its understanding manifest and communicate themselves un-conceptually: they spring up initially through this secret telling. In this way **God** immediately expresses himself through the face of nature; he communicates himself un-conceptually to man through feeling (*Empfindung*) turned into **prayer**; and teaches the spirit, **also** awoken **to the suprasensible and uncreated**, to stammer the joyfulness of beauty and good, and to eventually express that word of life: his name."[140]

In the end, man's virtue is defined by the activity of relating to the origin of his being and knowledge. Thus, man's identity is not shaped according to the paradigm of self-sufficiency. Humanity defines defines its identity in being the rational animal that recognizes the origin of any identity.

This line of reasoning will assume progressively a more defined fashion as the text proceeds.

And yet, in these few introductory paragraphs Jacobi suggests the general outline of his overall effort to defend the crucial thesis: the necessity of our ontological dependency on the living God. The Aristotelian moral dimension in which the term *Trieb* has grown, therefore, should not overshadow the Christian interpretation of the origin of the true, good, and beautiful. To be sure, the

139 F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 7.
140 F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 7-8.

moral definition of the rational impulse fulfils the twofold function of connecting humans to the ultimate reality both epistemologically and ontologically. On the one hand, Jacobi's notion of reason raises human cognition beyond the bare causal description of natural phenomena; on the other hand, the same notion provides a description of the human (and every being's) condition, which consists in being finite, dependent, and derived.[141]

Despite Jacobi's attempt to affirm the necessity of this rational revelation, he ends up being not quite clear about its structure. Regardless of Jacobi's too often convoluted train of thought, we clearly learn that the existence of God is perceived despite feelings, images, and words.[142] The mature Jacobi seems to contradict the young Jacobi by disposing of feelings and words in his investigation of the true; but from its beginning, the *Divine Things* proves to be a book about the ultimate truth about feeling, faith, or intuition. The *Divine Things* aims to unearth what all these notions entail but never define properly. For this reason, the narrative of this treatise turns toward an investigation of the nature of God and the divinity within humans: only the definition of the divine may shed light on the notion of revelation, which is the common feature of feeling, faith, and intuition.

First, God must not be conceived as equal to infinite being, because infinite being does not have any existence or form. Thus, God must be finite, yet the finitude of God must be of a special kind.

Jacobi's critique of the notion of God is indebted to ancient philosophy and goes as far back as to Plato, who in the *Philebus* shows how infinite being does not have any being because that which is not limited has no shape. This teaching is reminiscent of Parmenides' enmity against the *apeiron*, the infinite shapeless being which is contrary to truth for the same reason that it is contrary to being: lack of identity. The unlimited does not escape limitedness; it just loses being. Hence, under the tutelage of Plato and Parmenides, Jacobi maintains that since the infinite being, the *apeiron*, cannot have being, the conception of God as infinite being should be rejected, for *apeiron* clearly implies

141 Cf. F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 6-7.
142 F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 7-8.

the equation of God with the so-called 'All' - the opposite of the 'One'.[143] The "All" - as in *All-will* - is a concept that carries in itself the necessary annihilation of being because the negation of *peras*, limit, implies the cancellation of identity. The annihilation of identity that the *apeiron* so clearly presents corresponds to the annihilation of the determination of any reality grounded upon that All: "the delusion of the shapeless, of a pre-scribed absurdity (*Unding*) taken as first, which would be All but not One—it is the No-thing itself."[144] Since the limitless is No-thing, Jacobi concludes that the general rule to define being is *peras* (limit).

This last point must be clearly restated so as to avoid a misunderstanding. Being is not conceived as a principle for the emanation of the actual, or a ground upon which the possible is sustained. Rather it shows itself through *peras*. As a consequence, different relations to *peras* define different ways in which being reveals itself: if on one side animals are those beings that know the *measured* through the sense perception of limits, on the other side humans are those beings that know the *measure* that defines limits through reason. Animals and humans share the sense perception of the measured, but humans possess something that animals are not endowed with: the capacity to see the measure that defines beings. Eventually, God is the one that *creates* measure by creating *peras*. Since everything that exists must have measure, then measure is the fundamental feature of everything that exists, therefore also God has an essential relation to measure or, as Jacobi says, "he himself is measure."[145]

Reason

[143] F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 12.
[144] F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 11.
[145] Cf. Plato, *Laws*, IV, 716c, and Plato, *Theaetetus*, 151d and ff. See Kenneth Sayre, *Plato's Late Ontology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983) and Nicholas P. White, *Plato on Knowledge and Reality* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976). This is another topic that would much enrich the analysis of the issues at stake in the *Divine Things*, above all for the connection of politics and epistemology that Jacobi—along with his peers—implies. Cf. George di Giovanni, *Introduction: The Unfinished Philosophy of Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009). Cf. F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 12.

According to this general framework, the relation between measure and God seems quite intelligible from an ontological point of view. Yet its epistemological consequence for human understanding forces Jacobi to analyse reason in compliance with this platonic conception of divinity.

Reason performs a quasi-divine action by measuring human epistemological conditions, by limiting the discursive understanding (*Verstand*), and by identifying its boundaries and nature.

Nevertheless, human rational activity is not the mere *analogus* of the divine action of creation. The limitation of the understanding presents only an example of the power of this rational impulse. In other words, Jacobi uses the notion of measuring and limiting in order to highlight the feature of reason's proper activity. In fact, by having access to the *measure* and not only to the *measured*, reason shows its receptivity to the origin of beings. The individuality of beings is not the source of their infirmity; on the contrary, the individuality of beings is what keeps them from nothingness and shows their original relation to their creator.

Reason accomplishes the level of objectivity that true science involves, but at the same time it manifests a decisive opposition to the knowledge provided by the discursive understanding. In fact, reason fulfils the epistemological function of knowing the identities of beings, but this knowledge - the knowledge of their *peras* - does not imply that those limits originate their being. The action of creating their being is different than the measure through which they are defined.

This aspect can be seen also on the side of human knowledge: the fact that humans know the measure of the measured does not imply that they create either the measure or the measured. As opposed to reason, the discursive understanding does not possess any real knowledge precisely because it does not see the measure, it just makes use of measure by means of separating, mixing, and connecting individuals. Moreover, to this epistemological difference the understanding adds also a different "impulse": the understanding assumes that it creates the measured, beings, through its actions of separating, mixing, and connecting individuals. Reason, on the contrary, accesses the unique reality of beings because it possesses the capacity to identify the singular individual per se by

means of an impulse that connects reason to the original creator.[146] In short, reason acquires what on one side is not 'manufactured' by the categorical play of the understanding, because it acts prior to any action carried out by the understanding.

At this point, Jacobi wants to stress the principal outcome of his theory of *peras*, and in doing so he wants to prevent the reader from the grave mistake of not recognizing the true impulse of reason: we must not assign the source of measure to ourselves, though we recognize both the measured and the measure. If the subject referred the constitution of the 'measure' of objects to himself—by assigning to himself the action of determining individualities—then the whole being would fade into a system of subjective relations established by the understanding: we would not have singular beings, we would rather have a whole in which any element is just mixed and connected.

This mistake arises only because we apply the usual functional pattern of understanding—which consists in categories that determine things only by means of the *relation* between the things—to the things themselves. Conversely, Jacobi states that the pure rational faculty identifies what is *presupposed* by those relations, hence reason acknowledges that the individuality of objects is produced by something different from the subject.

If the general development of Jacobi's thought is now clear, it becomes more urgent to address the question of the essential fragility of his late work, which lacks the telluric power and sharp insight of his early writings.[147] One can downgrade the philosophical meaning of this discrepancy by assuming that Jacobi had always been more properly a talented reader of philosophy than a philosopher per se. According to this perspective, the project of the *Divine Things* appears to grow out of a keen knowledge of the major texts of modern philosophy alongside a remarkably pronounced

[146] F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 18.

[147] There would be much more to say about this. We might spend more time focusing on the new topics and themes Jacobi developed after the 1799, for instance, and we might deal with the cultural movements of the late XVIII-early XIX century that influenced Jacobi's production. I will here for the sake of brevity leave this as an intimation and refer the reader to George di Giovanni, *Introduction: The Unfinished Philosophy of Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 153-167.

awareness of what he called "the spirit" hidden in them.[148] In other words, Jacobi seems to be able to shed light on concealed systematic connections and to compose a weaving of surprising metaphysical as well as social implications of apparently accepted theoretical agendas.[149] In the end, thought, he would seem unable to develop an original and sound philosophical viewpoint. One might say that his analysis is rooted in a profound understanding of the most relevant philosophical issues, yet is incapable of yielding new conceptual frames. Schelling's polemical reaction to the *Divine Things* is vividly summed up in his depiction of Jacobi's trembling spirit which, according to Schelling's poisoned ink, would be ready to fly off into the arms of the divine reality. This irony is telling: it portrays the dire absence of clear statements in Jacobi's attempt to oppose the reasons of what he calls "materialistic philosophy".[150]

Although one can understand Schelling's position, I have a different opinion about Jacobi's general intention and the peculiar outcomes of his program. I do not want to dismiss the former hypothesis about the absence of a theoretically compelling proposal. But the *Divine Things* delivers an altogether different approach to the problem of knowledge while defining a distinction between thought that is grounded on the structure of consciousness, and thought that is considered per se. Therefore, I will not credit to Jacobi's late philosophy a kind of negative theology or, even worse, a kind of sentimental attitude toward the transcendental divine reality. Nevertheless, that is not say that Jacobi arrived at a fully defined position, or that his notion of reason anticipates Hegel's speculative logic. Jacobi's conception of both reason as impulse and God as creator of measure gives conceptual unity to the text, which escapes the dilemma of a system of the I inasmuch as it provides a different conception of thought.

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[148] Cf. K. Hammacher, *Kritik und Leben II. Die Philosophie Friedrich Heinrich Jacobis* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1969), and Lévy-Bruhl, *La Philosophie de Jacobi* (Paris: Alcan, 1894). See also Birgit Sankkaulen, "*Oder hat Vernunft den Mensch?* Zur Vernunft des Gefühls bei Jacobi," Zetischrift für philosophische Forschung 49 (1995): 416-429.
[149] Cf. G. di Giovanni, *Introduction*, 3-66.
[150] Cf. F. W. J. Schelling, "Denkmal der Schrift von den göttlichen Dingen und ihre Offenbarung. (1812)," in *Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling's Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. K.F.A. Schelling, I Abtheilung Vols. 1–10, II Abtheilung Vols. 1–4 (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856–61), Bd. VIII, 19. Please see also C. Ciancio, *Il dialogo polemico tra Schelling e Jacobi* (Edizioni di Filosofia: Torino, 1975).

As already stated, the *Divine Things* moves towards the analysis of those internal contradictions that constitute the opposite theory, which validates the determination of anything only according to the relation of a thing with its other. As a consequence, this system of relations gives body to the framework that inspires different forms of materialism.[151] Jacobi - as he often does according to his typical polemical dialectics - assumes that if God is not defined as creator of reality, then physical nature as such would lose its identity. Beings - any being - would be defined only according to the relations that the understanding would project on them. According to this materialistic view, the perception of the *peras* of beings would be discharged in favor of their network of interlinked determinations. Therefore, if reason is reduced to silence, knowledge of the objects would destroy their individuality only to promote a systematic All in which everything vanishes into indistinction. As Jacobi puts it: "It can be rigorously and clearly demonstrated to one who attentively looks into the truth that if man can have only an imaginary **God**, then he can also only have an imaginary **nature**."[152]

We can make sense of the question about the individuality of objects only if we presuppose that those objects actually exist, and they exist only if they have limits. If we remove the very notion of limit and define those objects only according to the categories of the understanding (which mix and compose), we would eventually contemplate the bare consistency of this system of relations where no individual thing subsists, without even realizing the absence of reality. In fact, "[g]ladly, the understanding destroyed this question," the question of being.[153]

At this stage the assumption of the One-Creator arises on the horizon of our interpretation of the text: why should we assume a One-Creator? Why are our senses not enough to testify the

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151 We cannot explore this subject here, or we would have to go back to *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn*, and especially to the *David Hume über den Glauben, oder Idealismus und Realismus. Ein Gespräch*, since many of the themes are framed more clearly in those two treatises. Cf. Valerio Verra, *F.H. Jacobi. Dall'Illuminismo all'Idealismo* (Torino: Edizioni di "Filosofia", 1963), 195-260. Peter-Paul Schneider, *Die "Denkbücher" Friedrich Heinrich Jacobis* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann Holzboog, 1986), Klaus Hammacher, "Jacobi's Schrift Von den göttlichen Dingen," in *Religionsphilosophie und spekulative Theologie. Der Streit um die göttlichen Dingen (1799-1812)*, Philosophisch-literarische Streitsachen 3, ed. W. Jaeschke (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1994), 129-141.

152 F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 18.

153 F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 19-20

individualities of the objects that we know? Why do we need to assume a beginning in history? Why, if we assumed a beginning in history, do we need this beginning to be a personal God? In the end, since all the above questions are outcomes of the activity of reason, we need to face the fundamental question: what is reason? Only once we make explicit the nature of reason can we eventually ask for the definition of God and of his revelation.[154]

This is the problematic framework out of which the second part of the text, with the title "On Divine Things and their Revelation," takes shape. The second part of the *Divine Things* grows out of a long review of Matthias Claudius's complete works. We could split this long review into a first section including the actual analysis of Claudius's positive approach to the revelation of God, and a second section presenting a more general analysis of post-Kantian philosophy. While the former makes explicit the position of the so-called "integral externalists" and discusses the positivity of revelation, the latter considers the notion of God and unveils the complex argument against the "integral internalists" which pertains to the position that transcendental philosophy in general and idealism in particular hold. As we shall see, the latter is not wholly clear without the former, whereas the former positions to the key issues that Jacobi uses to define his own ideas of reason and immediate access to the absolute truth. For now, it is useful to keep in mind that if on one side M. Claudius represents the "integral externalist" who assumes that the external-historical revelation of God is the only valid source of truth, on the other side Jacobi affirms the necessity of a different kind of revelation that in his opinion matches the rational impulse that the human spirit embodies.

Matthias Claudius was a thinker and a poet with a religious leaning towards pietism; his pietistic ideas resonate especially in his treatise *On immortality*, where he claims that the highest truths neither come from outside us nor are our artefacts, for they proceed from within us. Indeed, they emanate from inside us although they are free from our subjective projections and desires. These supersensible ideas and concepts raise the human being over nature and necessity, to eventually raise

154 F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 26-27.

him towards the most elevated substances in him and outside him. They lead him to his immortal spirit and to the Oneness that is God and His will.[155]

Jacobi himself would share this thesis with his friend Asmus (M. Claudius' pen-name), yet Jacobi's understanding of the innate connection of the human spirit with the divine does not comply with the idolatrous reliance on Christ that M. Claudius professes.

The common trait that Jacobi shares with M. Claudius and all internalists is the understanding that the human spirit is superior to nature: "The outer world, or nature, does not produce those high opinions, concepts, ideas (which in the end will flow together into one according to our author's words), and they cannot be deducted from it either. Yet they are, ineradicably, borne in the innermost part of man, and they prove "that in man there is not only something Other than what is in nature, but even that this Other is more than nature and beyond it"."[156]

More precisely, human superiority is based on his technical and ethical essence: "Unbeatable like the ideas, inside man rules the consciousness of a faculty and an impulse to rise with spirit, intention, resolution, and thought over everything that is barely nature."[157] The human being can exercise a "dominion" over nature thanks to his capacity to have intentions and resolutions that result from an innate apprehension of what is good; the human spirit shows itself in the faculty to design reality, plan its environment, rule over nature. Thus, the human being's apprehension of empirical reality is not distinguished from his capacity to prevail over and control it. If in the *David Hume* Jacobi put effort in displaying the mere epistemology of natural phenomena by stressing how a specific kind of sensitivity is required to make room for reality of things, in the *Divine Things* the same sensitivity displays the full scope of this idea about sensitivity and presents the complete theory about humanity: sensitivity serves the human being's active ethical orientation.

As a result, the spiritual essence of the human being is not based on sheer contemplation; instead, only the technological-ethical essence of human beings constitutes the ontological difference

155 Cf. F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 33-35.
156 F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 32.
157 F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 33.

between natural objects and humans. Jacobi's famous religious liberalism, that provoked such a great uproar at the turn of the century, announces that the human spirit is constituted according to a paradigm that parallels that of the creator: the freedom to act. A person is above nature inasmuch as he can act independently of nature while remaining within nature. Without delay, Jacobi draws the conclusion: the human spirit belongs to a different plane of reality than a natural Thou. On this different plane of reality humans acquire an ethical I by means of a confrontation with a spiritual Thou: "Within man, the sight of the essence above him is inseparable from this consciousness: that essence is not only the highest being (*Allerhöchsten*), it is God, the All-one (*Alleinige*). This sight points to an Almighty (*Allmacht*) which is not only the indomitability (*Allgewalt*) of a blind soul of the world or nature—which itself obeys the necessity (in reality, only the fantastic ghost of necessity)—but it is the will of a willing being (*Wollende*), who consciously and freely allows everything that enjoys existence to exist for **love's sake**".[158]

The consciousness of human diversity and emancipation from nature is the trait that humans accord to their spiritual aspect, and the one that humans assign to the being that is above them. To be sure, humans are conditioned: they are conditioned by nature on the side of their body, and by God on the side of their spiritual individuality. But while the determination that affects them in the empirical plane of reality does not condition them, the determination that affects them in the spiritual plane of reality conditions their essence, actions, and prayer.

Both Nature and God are essential parties involved in *determining* them as an I, but only the latter provides the *condition* for their humanity. Moreover, Jacobi does not limit himself to suggest a vague idea of their spiritual origin, for the being that stands at the beginning of creation shows will and personality. Jacobi's notion of creator is not a *natura naturans* because it remains different from its creation and because it creates from nothing. It is called an "organizing reason" ever since Plato

158 F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 33.

in light of the fact that its creating power shows itself in the capacity to define the measurement of being.[159]

Yet, the pivotal point of Jacobi's argument on the personality of God does not lie in the fact that the origin of all beings must be the creator of both measure and measured; the argument supporting the thesis of the personality of God rests on the fact that we humans have personality. For Jacobi, only our ability to identify ourselves as free agents and to immediately recognize the necessity of a beginning in time gives rise to our certainty in a personal God. In the end, our self-consciousness requires a "Thou" from which this self-conscious I arises. And this confrontation cannot unfold in our daily confrontations with other finite self-consciousnesses because our self-consciousness must be ontologically *conditioned* as self-consciousness at the beginning of our history, and not only *determined* within a world of finite I's. The being that sets the conditions of our being must have created our self-consciousness from the very beginning. Hence, the spiritual Thou that conditions our spiritual I must be endowed with "self-consciousness, substantiality, and personality" as well.[160] Put simply, God is "model and portrayal" of ourselves,[161] only he is mightier. Jacobi is convinced that this is the reason why the definition of a personal God has changed over the centuries: people have portrayed God drawing on their "virtue, their moral attitude (*Zustand*);"[162] but God's function has never been revised. One might even interpret the history of the development of our moral attitude as a history of a religion which is the same true religion that shows how the proper image of God matures as people develop their own proper virtue.

Jacobi's idea of religious evolution does not attest to some kind of religious relativity, rather it vouches for a history of revelation that mirrors the maturation of humankind. In the end, Jacobi's interpretation of the history of revelation overlaps the progressive refinement of humankind in Lichtenberg's prophecy. The only - but major - difference is that Jacobi's idea of evolution assumes

159 F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 24-25.
160 F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 26.
161 F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 35.
162 F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 35.

human dependency as a key factor. The key factor that evolves throughout history is self-conscious humanity, and it is the same factor that makes us intimately relate to and sympathize with foreign cultures and people. Jacobi accepts the thesis according to which humans can evolve spiritually only under the condition that we also assume that for an evolution to occur we need to accept that spiritual continuity be confirmed.[163] This evolution does not oppose the innate and immediate apprehension of the true God, rather it stands in opposition to the idolatrous cult of Christ. Jacobi maintains that this worship is contrary to the real religious message of Christ in view of the fact that true religion only applies to the cult of God, the creator. Everything else is just either a messenger, a mediator, or an image of the true, but it must not be confused with the true itself.[164]

While expressing the most affected considerations around friendship and love, Jacobi concludes that his conception of religious spirit rejects M. Claudius' anthropomorphism along with any finite image of the absolute person. And once again, Jacobi affirms that the difference between his position and that of the "integral externalists" (like M. Claudius) stems from the principle of his anthropology: man has spiritual being, and spirit is the internal impulse to acknowledge the existence of the Creator, by which human spirit is conditioned. Yet again, this position does not relinquish the necessity of a historical manifestation of religion. On the contrary, it places the historical manifestations of God such as images and writings at the center of human spiritual cultivation; but those same images only fulfil one function: they are only messengers of the holy Architect. They serve the purpose of nourishing the human heart and leading it towards the true creator of measure. Only a false virtue - a false heart - would turn them into means of idolatry.

Notwithstanding his clear stance, Jacobi does not hold the opposite thesis, for he does not embrace the approach of the enlightened philosopher who treats God as a mere subjective idea. According to Jacobi's terminology, the enlightened philosopher provides the portrayal of the "integral internalist," who is unmoved and unperturbed before the concept of God precisely because God has

163 F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 36.
164 F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 40-41.

grown inside his intelligence as nothing more than a content of his thought: since in the idea of God philosophers only see the image of themselves, they do not bow to this idea. The God of philosophers is not a Thou who conditions humans, but it is rather just a concept with distinct predicates.[165] This different approach to the internalist's conception of God brings to an end Jacobi's dispute with Matthias Claudius. It leads him to alter the targets and contents of the text. Indeed, Jacobi shares the internalist's approach as long as it does not turn God into an intellectual abstraction. This is not to say that intellectual abstraction is always reprehensible.

It is unquestionable that knowledge in its systematic form is acceptable as long as we assume yet another kind of knowledge along with that. This different kind of knowledge is, according to the Kantian remark, "merely foreseen and fervently desired by reason". The *Divine Things* is devoted to making room for the proper identification of this specific kind of knowledge, which on one side is unconditioned by facts and events external to the subject (thus 'internal'), but on the other side is not internal as is the knowledge generated by the understanding, and thus applied in the sciences either.[166]

While referring to Fries' *Neue Kritik der Vernunft* Jacobi re-states the immediate certainty that labels the special kind of knowledge of reason. Yet again, Jacobi's notion of rational immediacy is not to be taken as a distinct epistemological faculty that yields peculiar designs or structures in the process of apprehension; Jacobi goes as far as to say that reason can appropriately be called "**moral feeling**, other times **feeling of truth**".[167] And it is that feeling of truth that constitutes our being and makes of us the judges of what we see and think. That feeling provides the paradigm of the true, good, and beautiful so that "[w]ithin it [that feeling] the true itself, as much as the good itself and the beautiful itself, reveal themselves without intuition (*Anschauung*) or concept (*Begriff*)."[168]

To be sure, Jacobi maintains that reason is the "faculty (*Vermögen*) of presupposing the true," but this faculty does not define an activity of the transcendental subject; instead, this faculty defines

165 F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 50.
166 F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 56-57.
167 F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 55.
168 F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 55.

the way in which a person acts. The ontological commitment of Jacobi differentiates his inquiry from the transcendental discourse in the very moment that it grounds his theory of the true on his anthropology. Jacobi would reject the idea of "faculty" as long as "faculty" is conceived as an activity performed by a subject whose existence is not conditioned by that activity. Instead, Jacobi grounds the existence of the subject on this very activity. The term "faculty" does not involve a transcendental mediation between a subject and an object, but 'merely' states the being of the subject. This different interpretation of the concept of "faculty" impacts the other notion of "presupposing." This latter does not simply refer to a hypothesis or a transcendental "für-wahr-halten", but rather refers to the ontological affinity of the subject to what is presupposed. The same affinity was previously implied in the "impulse" to know what is higher than the human but which, at the same time, is also a condition for the personality of human beings.

Again, Jacobi uses the term "virtue" to assemble a theory of knowledge that makes explicit the onto-ethical value of his idea of presupposing the true: the presupposition does not weigh on the subject's shoulders like a rational need or duty, nor does it have the form of a necessary hypothesis that would give consistency to subjective knowledge. The whole collection of activities that originate from this presupposition provides the profile of a **"virtuous nature**." for they "are worthy for their own sake and not because they are means for other aims from which one has to infer their needs and accept their prescriptions".[169] The virtuous activities are cleared from references to duty or happiness because they simply display the sublimity of personality that acts according to its innate impulse to see the world from the point of view of its origin. If a reward is not achieved and our virtue is frustrated, the definition of virtue remains unaffected; unhappiness simply manifests the "mystery" of creation and the distance between our infinite condition and our finite complexion. [170]

[169] F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 56.
[170] See F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 57.

Jacobi's Realism

Philosophers, idealists, interiorists live the illusion of an abstract and completely subjective truth as much as the exteriorists who bestow the criterion of the true upon an objective and external source. Jacobi's realism assumes traits from both interiorists and exteriorists. His notion of reason as virtue or impulse provides an ontology according to which the subject is constituted as a being that perceives the source of truth. The exteriority of the source of truth is authoritative only inasmuch it complements the ontological constitution of the subject. But if this dialectic is the same that Jacobi also debated at the beginning of his philosophical efforts in the *Spinoza Letters* and in the dialogue *David Hume*, something makes the *Divine Things* different than past achievements. Jacobi's intention is to find a point of balance between interiorists and exteriorists, and to oppose his realism to a new trend in philosophy. Jacobi's notion of the rational impulse that recognizes the "divine things" grounds his realism and expands the seminal paradigm of transcendental philosophy: the investigation of what makes humans different than any other natural objects.

In fact, according to Jacobi, an unparalleled paradigm shift has happened in the history of modern philosophy when Kant clearly affirmed in the opening of the *Critique of Pure Reason* that the sole objects of philosophy are the transcendent ideas of freedom, immortality, and God. The problem concerning the impossibility of objective knowledge of those ideas gave rise to a methodological preoccupation which aroused 25 years of philosophical disputes. But the young Jacobi remained loyal to Kant's definition of the object of philosophy and praised the theistic thesis that both pre-critical and critical philosophy maintained. The very same theism that Jacobi finds in the second Critique grounds on the subject's practical reason the entire architecture of thought. The authority of practical reason over pure reason made the mature Jacobi even more convinced that Kant's philosophy develops to their fullest extent - although problematically - his own ideas. In the end, the value of Kant's transcendental philosophy is placed entirely in his theory of the postulates,

whose value Fichte failed to recognize.[171] Those postulates of practical reason epitomize the capacity of the subject to connect to the reality of a personal God. Therefore, philosophy would become the field of a pure human intelligence without God only at cost of the rejection of the only true philosophical object – an event that occurred with Fichte's doctrine of knowledge.

The second daughter of transcendental philosophy, Schelling's philosophy, while trying to fix the problems of the transcendental by defining the logical principle of knowledge - like the doctrine of knowledge has done before - brings to completion this progressive annihilation of the presence of a personal God within the system of human knowledge, and turns the subjective system into the only reality where the theory of postulates is expelled.

The fact that the theory of postulates represents such a great source of inspiration for Jacobi appears clearly once we look at the keystone of Jacobi's realism, as it is developed in this polemical context. Jacobi was convinced that the notion of two realities - the transcendental subject on one side and nature on the other side - was destined to develop into the dialectic of the Fichtean I in light of the equation between consciousness and thought. Jacobi, instead, lays the foundation of his realism on the basis of his distinct interpretation of the nature of thought, which yields an ethical meaning of reason. Interpreting reason as impulse entails the rejection of the structure of consciousness as a paradigm for our thinking. It implies the exclusion from the debate about the true, beautiful, and good of the issues connected to sensation, perception, and consciousness in general. The notion of impulse stresses how rational thinking exceeds consciousness while showing that reason has an ethical essence.

In general, we may maintain that the *Divine Things* presents a new notion of thinking that comprehends those presuppositions of consciousness inasmuch as reason is free from any content of consciousness and, as a consequence, assimilates a reality that is not "for the subject." Interpreting reason as a virtue unearths the priority and superiority of the will over the dialectic of consciousness,

[171] F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 69.

and substantiates the most advanced report about an ethical doctrine according to which being is not an object of consciousness, and is not a mere "non-I." In fact, this rational will - this impulse that human beings feel in themselves - is not a mere will that defines and organizes the world of objects. The rational impulse is not the act of creation of non-I's, because this will is deprived of the qualities of a consciousness. Thus, the will does not oppose itself to an object either positing it or perceiving it. This new definition of subject - that we might call *person* - is defined by the rational impulse to act in compliance with the metaphysical presuppositions that are prior to any perceived or posited object. These presuppositions are the Kantian practical postulates that Jacobi welcomes in his re-configuration of reality: free acting, immortality of the soul, and the Creator of the world. Jacobi defines reality according to these postulates that cannot be known for they are immediately apprehended by rational impulse. The existence of a world created by God and the existence of an immortal soul able to act freely are those divine things that ground a concrete and true knowledge of both finite and infinite individualities, of both objects and subjects.

The *Divine Things* is definitely a mature work. It distances itself from Jacobi's more famous texts for it also testifies to its independence from those past debates about the systematic development of transcendental philosophy. To be sure, with this work Jacobi liberates himself from those disputes and takes a step in the direction of a more personal and innovative understanding of existence, while re-affirming his polemical attitude against those philosophies that seem to obliterate it. In the *Divine Things* Jacobi inaugurates a comprehension of existence that leads him far apart from epistemological debate towards a more precise ethical definition of being. We could say that for Jacobi our being rests on a rational virtue, an impulse, that is the expression of a will. Yet Jacobi does not read this will as the expression of a consciousness that exercises its drive upon a world of objects, nor as the expression of a consciousness that creates its world. Rather, reason is will, which acts in conformity with a divine measure that sets the limits of being. Therefore, according to Jacobi's thought, apprehension primarily means innate dedication to singularity.

Within this new framework of reason's practical primacy, Jacobi values how Kant saves the possibility of thinking about beings by means of limiting the reach of the sciences of phenomena and by affirming the practical perception of true being. This paradigms define Jacobi's non-scientific philosophy which, he says, is "the oldest and will always survive."[172]

The Last Threat

If being is defined only according to these limits, Jacobi sees in Schelling's philosophy the last threat to real being. Schelling's philosophy of identity changed the paradigm of thinking by removing the dialectic of singular beings from the unity of being, and by bringing Spinoza's project to its full completion. This way, Schelling's thought provides no ground for existence inasmuch as existence is annihilated once being is considered just the form of a universal totality.[173] The notion of unitotality characterizes Schelling's successful effort to present the result of a systematic character of Kant's mistakes. In fact, Jacobi claims that Kant was right two times; thus, he was wrong. In fact: 1) Kant was right in admitting that reason has access to unconditioned truths, but he admitted also that there is knowledge of finite beings through the understanding because philosophy admits truths only by means of justification. In this sense, Kant had to downgrade what he has just affirmed about the potential knowledge of reason and introduce the unconditioned ideas only at the service of transcendental structure. 2) Kant admits that practical reason has primacy over theoretical reason. However, he also stated that reason merely fantasizes when asked for an epistemological account.

172 F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, footnote p. 80.
173 See E. Herms, "Selbsterkenntnis und Metaphysik in den philosophischen Hauptschriften Jacobis," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 58 (1976), 121-163. Cf. F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 80.

For this ambivalent attitude towards reason, he was eventually wrong. Jacobi criticizes Kant for not having recognized that his transcendental inquiry hints at a broader conception of knowledge that involves cognition without phenomenal content.[174] Accordingly, Kant would disagree with himself because the understanding finally admits that if we have to leave room for the objectivity and truthfulness of the rational ideas, then we have to affirm that the understanding is not the proper apparatus to know the "true".[175]

In this way, Schelling turns what in Jacobi's eyes are weaknesses into strength, because the system of unitotality is grounded on an infinite chain of justification that interconnects the totality of being and makes of this totality the principle of their existence.

Instead, notwithstanding the rationality and truthfulness of rational ideas, Jacobi's realism is theism inasmuch as "[e]ven the **theist**, **as a naturalist**, presupposes the autonomy of nature inasmuch as and to such an extent that he severely prevents himself from understanding and explaining **in** nature anything different from it. At the same time, he acknowledges as a **law of science** that it does not want to know about God and, on the whole, the supernatural because—as nature is **a reflection** [*Reflex*] **of the first**—it necessarily ceases where the other begins. Nevertheless, he demands that the naturalist do the same, who in turn dogmatically claims: **everything is nature; nothing is outside or above nature**".[176] Therefore Jacobi's theism is as moderate as the naturalists' (and the idealists') is fanatic. Theism does not side with the internalists nor with the externalists, but it assumes that the whole of nature is not closed and justified in itself. The principle of reason that rules over science and systematic philosophy cannot accept this assumption, for it would require the idea of having at least another being different from the unitotality of nature. Yet only by assuming that nature is not the unitotality can we actually have license to speak of existing things.[177]

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174 Cf. F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 82-83.
175 Cf. F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 83-84.
176 Cf. F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 89.
177 Cf. F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 90.

The pure naturalist (which is the personification of the pure internalist as well as the pure externalist, for both assume the conception of the unitotality that rejects even the possibility of more than one being) falls into nothingness because he contradicts the principle of any definition, the assumption of a *genus proximum* and of a *differentia specifica*.[178]

Aristotle helps Jacobi make his main criticism against the naturalists explicit and - to tell the truth - more concrete. The lack of definition of reality when the latter is conceived as an unitotality internal and external, and works on the level of the universal (*genus proximum*) as well as on the level of the singular (*differentia specifica*). In fact, both a being that results from an immanent *Ensoph* and the notion of 'whole of nature' (unitotality) remain undetermined, a no-thing. The last fight against Schelling's unitotality is waged on the basis of Kant's theory of postulates and notion of reason, but on the other side Jacobi's argument rests on Aristotle's logical instruments for the definition of a being. Jacobi develops his metaphysics on the basis of what the postulates of the pure practical reason profess, and states the principal characteristic of the intelligent God, but the intelligent God cannot provide a counterargument to use against Schelling's philosophy of identity. An intelligent God is the *sufficient* condition for a creation to be, but only Aristotle's *Metaphysics* makes the function of the intelligent God explicit by explaining the *necessity* of this assumption. Nevertheless, since the very notion of justification is banned from the realm of the rational apprehension of divine things, the reference to Aristotle's *Metaphysics* serves the purpose of criticizing the opposite party. In other words, the necessity of the intelligent God is based on the inconceivability of the opposite thesis.

By opposing Schelling to Aristotle, Jacobi is using Aristotle to escape the nihilism of systematic philosophy as such. In fact, Aristotle has successfully proven that *genus proximum* and *differentia specifica* are the only means to define anything, be it the unity of reality or the elements within that unity.[179] Reality, in other terms, cannot be defined in its unity if not confronted by a different and equally independent being (a Creator). Similarly, nothing "wholly passive" within that

[178] Cf. F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 91.
[179] Cf. F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 91.

reality can be determined as no object is defined through the determinate negation that Spinoza's system provides. As a result, the system that is reduced to a continuous production of its objects is just continuity of production without beginning, end, or content. The only feature that transpires within this absolute motility where nothing is stable, is an empty time.[180]

Time rules over an *apeiron* that does not show limits within itself or outside itself. As is immediately clear, this nothingness contradicts our sensible perception, our deeds, our feelings, and self-consciousness. Thus, this thesis that has turned anything conceivable into nothing is clearly an absurdity: "This changeability is itself, so we were told, in its **root** something **unchangeable**, i.e. the holy and eternally productive elemental power of the world. On the other hand, in its **outcome**, in the explicit effective world, it is an absolute **changeability**, so that in every determined moment the whole of the essence is nothing. According to this, it is indisputable that, for the naturalists, God's creative Word (*Schöpferwort*) proclaims from eternity to eternity: **let there be nothing**! He evokes **nothing out of being**, like the God of the theists who **gives birth to the being out of nothing**."[181]

Eventually, Jacobi must assume his theism also for the sake of an explanation of *physis* per se. The higher principle of definition that Aristotle provides and that Jacobi's theism brings to its comprehensive interpretation represents the paradigm of Jacobi's criticism against the contradiction of naturalism, but still, it does not provide a justification in support of Jacobi's theism which rests on immediate apprehension only. Jacobi's thesis about the existence of an external cause of nature, a Creator-God, is only "an inexplicable presupposition because it firmly claims a connection of all conditioned to a single unconditioned, and does not reveal the real association (*Zusammenhang*) between the two."[182]

This is the way that Jacobi finds to speak of the necessity of God-cause without falling into the trap of justifying its existence. The problem of understanding the connection between cause and effect reflects the problem of justifing the existence of a cause and its features. Jacobi assumes that

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[180] Cf. F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 92.
[181] Cf. F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 92-93.
[182] Cf. F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 99.

human intellect cannot look into the principle of the unconditioned once the unconditioned is conceived as a cause. Without mentioning it, Jacobi understands the difficulty of explaining the motility of a cause-effect chain; so much so that he concludes this should be the reason behind the Eleatic rejection of any change whatsoever. Nevertheless, he is also convinced that the problem of understanding and defining the notion of beginning, that the notion of cause so clearly embodies, is not avoided by rejecting change. The rejection of a beginning of change dismantles reality as such together with the possibility of defining its parts. Escaping from all this abstract nothingness is the only purpose of our rational essence: if there is no creator, unitotality arises as the only alternative.

Thus, Jacobi needs to assume a contradictory thesis, that the Creator and reality are co-eternal: God creates from eternity to eternity. Yet this contradiction is merely apparent for it rather affirms the impossibility of discerning and judging what is instead the principle of judging and discerning: the notion of an origin of reality.

Both the naturalist and the theist cannot explain coming into being from one principle: naturalism rejects the notion of cause and thus removes the problem, but it falls into contradictions (for no singularity implies no being) and eventually into nothingness. On the other hand, theism assumes an unconditioned principle that gives rise to reality without explaining it because theism rejects explanation in light of the impossibility to bring about a justification for an absolute cause. Therefore, the idea of an unconditioned cause must only be apprehended immediately.[183] While the way that this cause of reality works is not explained, theism does not fall into contradictions. Reason can therefore collaborate with the understanding so that the understanding can perform a scientific description of reality without assuming the role of defining reality.

[183] Cf. F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 103.

The Problem of Existence

The distinctiveness of metaphysics: methodology

Though often used to label Jacobi's philosophical contribution, the mutual defining immediacy of "I" in front of "Thou" is not the first step that Jacobi takes in displaying his account of existence. It is likely the last. The dialogue *David Hume* (1787) offers a clear passage on this:

> I experience that I am, and that there is something outside me, in one and the same indivisible moment; and at that moment my soul is no more passive with respect to the object than it is towards itself. There is no representation, no inference, that mediates this twofold revelation (*Offenbarung*). There is nothing *in the soul* that *enters* between the perception of the actuality (*Würklichen*) outside it and the actuality (*Würklichen*) in it. There are no representations yet.[184]

To be sure, Jacobi maintains that mutual immediate contraposition between two existent parties is the only source of certainty, as he declares at the end of 1789: "the source of all certainty (*Gewissheit*): you are, and I am".[185] The revelation of the mutual defining existence of two distinct

[184] F.H. Jacobi, "David Hume," in *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel 'Allwill'*, p. 277.
[185] *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi's Werke*, eds Köppen, J.F. and Roth, C.J.F., vols. I–VI. Leipzig: Gerhard Fleischer. Reprinted, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968, p. 224. This excerpt comes from the fourth part of the so-called *Fliegende Blätter*, whose first part only was published in *Minerva* by Jacobi himself in 1817. Cf. Jacobi, 2007. The remaining three parts were first published by Friedrich Roth and Friedrich Köppen in the sixth volume of the

identities is the definition of certainty. But such simple—perhaps even simplistic—cornerstone lies at the center of a complex theoretical inquiry that extends over decades of private disputes and open controversies.[186]

We need to remember that the problem of determining the existence of singular things draws on a much wider debate that engaged intellectuals in 17th and 18th century, actively involving the young Jacobi. This debate was about methodology in metaphysics and ethics. We cannot detail two hundred years of treatises and pamphlets, but we need to bear in mind that the possibility of *certainty* in metaphysics and ethics was the core issue that prompted the inception and development of a wide range of philosophical disputes.[187] With thousands of pages penned over the different ways in which certainty in metaphysics and ethics may or may not be obtained, the Leibniz-Wolffian school appeared to gain the upper hand in the first half of the 18th century. Broadly speaking, this school maintained the necessity of applying the mathematical method to all sciences, metaphysics included.[188]

As early as in his *Kurtzer Unterricht von den vornehmsten mathematischen Schriften* (1710-11) Christian Wolff identifies the philosophical-scientific method with the mathematical method.[189] According to Wolff, knowledge is grounded on definitions, from which both axioms and postulates are immediately derived; these three groups of propositions do not need any proof, for they are "*propositiones indemonstrabiles*." Thus, according to Wolff, these first three groups of propositions

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edition of Jacobi's complete works (1812-1825) and will be included in the forthcoming *Denkbücher Friedrich Heinrich Jacobis* edited by Sophia Victoria Krebs in the series of Jacobi's critical edition.

186 The paragraph containing the abovementioned excerpt refers to a letter that Jacobi wrote at the end of 1789 to Kant, in which he briefly mentions the root of his theism. He maintains that his theism comes from the "Daseyn" of reason and freedom, which provides the "as evident as inexplicable (*unbegreiflich*) connection between the sensory and a suprasensory." Jacobi, 2015, p. 324.

187 For an overview see Wundt 1993 and Frängsmyr, 1975. The most relevant objection to the Leibniz-Wolffian method in metaphysics focuses on the distinction between the object of logic (the possible) and the object of philosophy (the actual), as it is presented as early as 1737 by Hoffmann 2010, § 21. On Leibniz, Wolff, and method in philosophy, see Arndt 1971, especially pp. 128 and ss.

188 As one might expect, the bibliography on this topic is extensive, but for a first orientation see Wolff 1983 (2), especially § 115, § 139, and § 167; Wolff 1983 (1), §§ 7-11; Wolff 1978 and Wolff 1981, especially §§ 671-716. On methodology in Wolff and the German Enlightenment in the 18th century see Fülleborn 1968; Tonelli 1959; Engfer 1983. More recently Dunlop 2013; Jesseph 1989; Sutherland 2010.

189 This method will later be thoroughly developed in both his *German Logic* and the *Discursus praeliminaris* of his *Latin Logic*. Cf. Engfer 1983, p. 55.

(definitions, axioms, and postulates) are the basis of a correct claim. After these propositions are assumed, by inferring from them one finally deduces theorems and problems. It is important to note that in the *German Logic* and in the *Metaphysics* Wolff states that the syllogism is introduced as the prime tool to infer theorems and problems from propositions that are self-evident. This is particularly significant for our purpose. In fact, the "*cogitationes se mutuo ponentes vel tollentes*" constitute a systematic connection between propositions (*Kette*) that draws conclusions from self-evident principles.[190] Hence, premises should be self-evident definitions and reasoning should be syllogistic; these are the keys for metaphysics and ethics to be scientific.

In light of the debate over Wolff's achievements, Jacobi's famous admission of his struggling with mathematics could either be taken as a point of trivia about his juvenile study, or it might be read as a hint to a sort of spontaneous siding with a group of philosophers reacting against the *morbus mathematicus*.[191] To tell the truth, if it is clear that Jacobi himself lamented the seizure of the Berlin and Paris Academies by intellectuals who resisted criticism of the Leibniz-Wolffian tradition of thought, it is also true that the debate was much more complex and multifaceted.[192] However, if we had to name the one event or text that—among a few others—had a decisive impact on Jacobi's growing interest in the methodology of metaphysics, we should name the essay that Kant submitted on the occasion of the famous *Preisfrage* that the Belin Academy of Sciences announced in 1761: *Untersuchung über die Deutlichkeit der Grundsätze der natürlichen Theologie und der Moral* (1764).[193]

As clearly appears from the title of the *Preisfrage*, the Academy tried to address the international concern about methodology in metaphysics:

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190 On the difference between "analysis" and "synthesis" in Wolff's method see Tonelli 1976.
191 H. More, "Epistola H. Mori ad V.C." 105-129. In *Opera Omnia II*. (Hildesheim: Olms, 1966), p. 108.
192 Cf. E. Pistilli,. *Tra Dogmatismo e Scetticismo. Fonti e Genesi della Filosofia di F.H. Jacobi*. (Pisa-Roma: Fabrizio Serra, 2008), pp. 87-88.
193 Cf. F.H. Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. George di Giovanni (Montréal: McGill-Queen University Press), pp. 281-285.

On demande, si les vérités métaphysiques en général et en particulier les premiers principes de la Théologie naturelle et de la Morale sont susceptibles de la même évidence que les vérités mathématiques, et au cas qu'elles n'en soient pas susceptibles, quelle est la nature de leur certitude, à quel degré elle peut parvenir, et si ce degré suffit pour la conviction.[194]

Kant's essay replied to the Academy's question by showing the peculiar method of metaphysics and by emphasizing its independence from mathematics. Among the issues that Kant tackles in his essay, two in particular are of interest to understand the fundamental character of metaphysics and to clarify Jacobi's point of departure in conceiving a theory of existence.[195]

First, Kant observes that mathematical sciences proceed via synthesis starting from a clear and simple definition that is fabricated by the human mind (the aforementioned self-evident premises). On the contrary, metaphysics proceeds via analysis through the progressive scrutiny of what is immediately given as a premise. As a consequence, if mathematics puts at the beginning of demonstrations a simple conceptual keystone that is constructed, metaphysics works its way backwards through the analysis of unclear assumptions eventually to define the simple principle that sustains the entire design. While in mathematics arguments do not raise any question about the definitions out of which they develop, metaphysics is called to look for those very definitions that are not known, though immediately assumed "in a confused fashion."[196] Thus, while mathematics starts with the definition of its object and proceeds by combining and comparing concepts related to that definition, metaphysics starts with what is unknown to find only at the end of its analysis the definition of what grounds its entire orbit. Mathematics puts at the beginning of its chain of

194 The German version was published in June 1761 in *Berlinische Nachrichten von Staats- und Gelehrten Sachen*. The French word "*évidence*" is translated with "*Deutlichkeit*," which is the term Kant uses in his essay in contrast to Mendelssohn who opts for "*Evidenz*." Cf. Campo 1953.
195 Cf. Sandkaulen 2015.
196 I. Kant, "The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God" 107-201. In *Theoretical Philosophy 1755-1770*, ed. David Walford in collaboration with Ralf Meerbote (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 250.

reasoning an indemonstrable yet solid key; metaphysics does not lay its foundations on sound and clear grounds but relies on the power of analysis only. As a consequence, metaphysics aims at unearthing the determination of what appears to be immediate and basic for our understanding, but which is utterly unclear—e.g. it is led by questions such as "what is existence?" or "what is time?". The progress of metaphysics is thus slow, and the distance covered is short. It seems as if metaphysics, for its lack of definite foundations, adheres to the utterly active and ambulatory nature of pure thinking, which appears to be deprived *of* a beginning because it only dwells *in* the beginning. Like pure thinking, metaphysics is deprived of the kind of perspective that arises after the principle of a doctrine has been defined and its consequences constructed. Metaphysics does not look back to the principle from where metaphysics moves, nor does it list a connection (*Kette*), nor does it look forward to possible combinations and permutations; metaphysics only questions the beginning of thinking itself.

Second, the way we err in metaphysics is different from the way we err in mathematics: a mistake in metaphysics does not entail a vice in argumentation—like mathematics—but the judgement that one gives on an unknown matter; applying the synthetic method to metaphysics is what makes philosophers err: "we venture to make judgments, even though we do not know everything which is necessary for doing so."[197] In metaphysics we make mistakes when we insist on extracting definitions out of the unknown subject matter.

Notwithstanding, it is not true that metaphysics does not have certainty. Metaphysics holds as certain those primary data from which it moves. Metaphysical certainty, in fact, relies on the immediacy of those primary data. For instance, natural theology (or, as Kant calls it in this text, "natural religion") having its object in the "first cause"[198] starts with the notion of *existence*, for it

[197] I. Kant, "The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God" 107-201. In *Theoretical Philosophy 1755-1770*, ed. David Walford in collaboration with Ralf Meerbote (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 266.
[198] I. Kant, "The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God" 107-201. In *Theoretical Philosophy 1755-1770*, ed. David Walford in collaboration with Ralf Meerbote (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 270.

seems to be the necessary presupposition for any *possibility* to be given. But if, on the one hand, existence is the immediate principle for anything to be determined, on the other hand, existence is initially not properly defined: it is just the given and confused concept that sustains the entire architecture of reality.

This thesis is acquired and further expanded in a different text by Kant, who elaborates a more thorough account of the notion of existence in the contemporary essay *Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund zu einer Demonstration des Daseins Gottes* (1763). This work, more than the abovementioned *Untersuchung über die Deutlichkeit der Grundsätze der natürlichen Theologie und der Moral*, stimulated Jacobi's intellectual fertility. This text enquires about the notion of existence as it represents the only possible ground for the demonstration of the existence of God. Strictly speaking, the text is not about the proof of God's existence per se; rather it sheds light on the metaphysical problems that the notion of existence gives rise to. And this is precisely the point that Jacobi seems to inherit.

A closer look at Kant's essay reveals that the concept of existence is inquired via *elenchos*, or, as it were, it is showed by negating what existence is not. Among the rich panorama of topics that this essay addresses, most of Jacobi's attention focuses on what Kant says about existence in general. Kant maintains: "if all existence is cancelled, then nothing is posited absolutely, nothing at all is given, there is no material element for anything which can be thought; all possibility completely disappears."[199]

It seems that existence is not something which we can represent to ourselves or something of which we can have experience; existence is rather a concept that gives form to the possibility of objects. Thus, existence lies at the beginning of the conceivability of experience or, in other words, it manifests itself neither in experience nor in our knowledge of experience, but rather only in pure thinking only. As Jacobi clearly mentions in his last book, *On Divine Things and their Revelation*,

[199] I. Kant, "The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God" 107-201. In *Theoretical Philosophy 1755-1770*, ed. David Walford in collaboration with Ralf Meerbote (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 123.

one may have an intuition and a representation of an object of experience, but existence is rather the unconditional *through which* everything is thought.[200]

Therefore, if *philosophy's* business is "to analyze concepts which are given in a confused fashion, and to render them complete and determinate (*ausführlich und bestimmt*)",[201] and if *metaphysics* is the part of philosophy that tries to make complete and determine "the fundamental principle of our cognition",[202] and if *existence* is the presupposition of any given object, it follows that a theory of existence—which represents that unconditional "through which" anything is thought—must adopt the metaphysical method to enquire what is presupposed in the very act of cognition.

As is now somewhat clearer, Jacobi's first steps into philosophy are thus connected to what Kant calls natural religion, even though they do not ultimately emerge from a religious urge. They rather display a precise metaphysical agenda since they are defined according to a methodological concern that the concept of existence as such generates. Yet Jacobi's interest in philosophy is not confined to the boundaries of epistemology. Doing justice to the essence of metaphysics—that extends well beyond the foundation of epistemology—Jacobi does not treat the theory of cognition as a theory about the ways in which we represent reality. His personal quest towards the particular status of existence leads him beyond those boundaries and their related disputes. Ever since his initial enthusiasm for philosophy, Jacobi did not aim only to arbitrate between the different epistemologies of Scottish common sense, Humean skepticism, or transcendental idealism as his dialogue *David Hume* might suggest. In fact, as he further validates in the 1815 Preface to his collected works, the unconditional object that existence represents is not attained by abstracting

200 Cf. "Von den göttlichen Dingen und ihrer Offenbarung". In Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Werke*, vol. 3, ed. Walter Jaeschke (Hamburg/Stuttgart: Meiner/Frommann Holzboog), pp. 82 and ff.
201 I. Kant, "The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God" 107-201. In *Theoretical Philosophy 1755-1770*, ed. David Walford in collaboration with Ralf Meerbote (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 250.
202 I. Kant, "The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God" 107-201. In *Theoretical Philosophy 1755-1770*, ed. David Walford in collaboration with Ralf Meerbote (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 256.

from representations or senses, but by removing a deceptive aspiration: to determine what is unconditional by abstracting data from our cognition of experience. He states:

> The illusions are twofold by which sensualism or materialism, by changing its name and form in a variety of ways while in truth always remaining the same..., has tried to cover up for its one-sideness and weakness, thus giving the impression that the concept of freedom and the conviction about the supersensible are also not strangers to it. The first of these illusions rests on the belief that the concept of the unconditional is obtained through protracted abstractions of the understanding.[203]

As regards the notion of the unconditional, what Jacobi writes in 1815 looks like the pre-critical Kant, both in fashion and purpose. Existence is accepted as the ground of reality:

> The "is" of the exclusive *reflective* understanding is equally an exclusive *relative* "is"; it expresses no more than the being *like something else* in concept, not the *substantial* "is" or "being." The latter, the real being (*Seyn*), being pure and simple, is given to know in feeling alone; in it the certain spirit manifests itself.
> We confess to our incapacity to *define* in which *form* the spirit certain of itself presents itself to man in feeling (objective and pure feeling), and makes him ready to cognize *what is only equal to itself*, i.e. to cognize the True directly and exclusively in the True, the Beautiful in the Beautiful, the Good in the Good, and thereby to acquire consciousness of a knowledge which is not merely a dependent knowledge *subject* to

[203] F.H. Jacobi, "Preface". In *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. George di Giovanni (Montréal: McGill-Queen University Press), p. 570.

demonstrations but stands independent *above* all demonstration, a truly sovereign knowledge.[204]

But the "is" also represents a challenge to our thinking for it is not an object of representation. To define existence, in fact, we need to appeal to a specific methodology that does not comply with the process through which we define objects of experience. It requires an analysis of the fundament through which we know objects of experience. As much as Kant in the *Untersuchung über die Deutlichkeit der Grundsätze der natürlichen Theologie und der Moral* and *Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund zu einer Demonstration des Daseins Gottes*, Jacobi embarked on an investigation of what thought assumes without representing. Thus, it is not implausible to suggest that Jacobi's method does not diverge much from the methodology that Kant illustrated in his 1763-1764 essays. Jacobi's method of inquiring into the assumption of our knowledge is, in fact, quite similar to Kant's metaphysical investigation.

One might even go so far as to identify Jacobi as a reformed metaphysician insofar as he assumes that it is impossible to apply a different method than that of analysis once the *logos* approaches existence. If with metaphysics we understand neither the *metaphysica specialis*—that analyzes the notion of soul, world, and God—nor the simple combination of natural theology and ethics—which analyzes the nature of God, the immortality of the soul, and freedom—but the Kantian reformation of the *metaphysica generalis*—which delves into the notion of *Dasein* per se—we can maintain that Jacobi employs notions such as "revelation" (*Offenbarung*) as part of a terminology that defines how we should think the foundation of our cognition.[205]

The *Spinozabriefe* provide a great panorama of issues that cannot be taken into consideration here, though some remarks might be useful for our inquiry. In this text Jacobi assumes that the geometrical method produces proofs as long as it demonstrates similarities or

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[204] F.H. Jacobi, "Preface". In *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. George di Giovanni (Montréal: McGill-Queen University Press), p. 582.
[205] Cf. Sandkaulen 1997.

differences, but that "[e]very proof presupposes something already proven, the principle of which is *Revelation.*"[206]

Like Kant before him, and as he himself seems to maintain in the long excerpt from the 1815 Preface cited above, in the *Spinozabriefe* Jacobi announces that geometry's systematic method might provide a sound representation of reality, but is of no use when it comes to the foundation of that representation. On the contrary, revelation provides what metaphysics looks for: the presupposition to representations, that is, the element that is necessary for predicates and their combinations. In fact, the term *Offenbarung* implies that the content revealed is neither the result of a *Kette* of composing and combining, nor a construction, as happens in the case of a definition. Revelation, instead, seems to exclude the subjective contribution to the content and form of the revealed. The content made available through revelation is, in fact, intended to be the objectively true, which appears to the subject's sight or "feeling," as Jacobi often puts it. Revelation does not hint just at the form—immediacy—of the manifestation of the "is," but it says much about the kind of object that is revealed. What is made available by revelation is not like any object. The specificity of revelation consists in its making available the object of metaphysics, which is not "what we know," but the "through which" we know.

We do not have to be distracted by the most common usage of this term; *Offenbarung* neither refers to a religious content nor expresses Jacobi's ideas concerning the process through which a subject knows a distinct religious entity. Primarily, it refers to the way in which a subject is immediately connected with the foundation of cognition in general. As Jacobi says in his work *David Hume*:

> We ordinarily say in German that objects *reveal* themselves to us through the senses; and the same form of expression is to be found in French, English, Latin, and several

[206] F.H. Jacobi, "Spinozabriefe". In *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. George di Giovanni (Montréal: McGill-Queen University Press), p. 234.

> other languages as well. We cannot expect to find it in Hume with the special emphasis that I have put on it, among other reasons because he leaves it everywhere undecided whether we actually perceive things *outside* us or merely perceive them *as* outside us. Thus, he says in the passage that I have just read to you: "…the real, or what is taken for such." And in keeping with his whole mode of thinking he must be more inclined in speculative philosophy toward sceptical idealism than toward realism. The committed realist, on the other hand, unquestionably accepts external things…his only thought is that all concepts, even those that we call *a priori*, must have derived from this fundamental experience.[207]

Thus, *Offenbarung* cooperates in defining how the object of metaphysics—existence—comes to be the fundament of cognition. *Offenbarung* excludes all proofs. It seems that Jacobi moves towards an investigation of *Dasein*, which remains "unquestionable" and independent of proofs or external grounding.

In the *Spinozabriefe* Jacobi finds Plato's words illuminating with respect to the issue under consideration: "[f]or regarding *divine things*, there is no way of putting the subject into words like other studies. Acquaintance with it must come rather after a long period of attendance to instruction in the subject itself and of close companionship with it, when, suddenly, like a blaze kindled by a leaping spark, it is generated in the soul and at once becomes *self-sustaining*."[208]

Since this immediate self-sustaining *Dasein* is the principle of our cognition, Jacobi entrusts himself with the task of re-shaping metaphysics as a theory of existence, eventually to ascertain the ethical profile thereof. According to Plato's quotation, "divine things" wait at the end of this investigation.

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[207] F.H. Jacobi, "Spinozabriefe". In *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. George di Giovanni (Montréal: McGill-Queen University Press), p. 272.
[208] F.H. Jacobi, "Spinozabirefe". In *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. George di Giovanni (Montréal: McGill-Queen University Press), p. 214. Italics is mine. See Plato, 1961, especially 341 c-d.

The certainty of existence

In this same work, the *Spinozabriefe*, Jacobi also tries to define his personal contribution to surpassing the analytical method of metaphysics, so as to make explicit the identity of existence. Right after mentioning *Offenbarung* he declares: "faith (*Glauben*) is the element of all human cognition and activity."[209] Following Jacobi's steps, we may try further to define existence by means of a few explanatory passages from *David Hume* that better explain the profile of *Glauben*. In fact, purposively set to explain the usage of the term *Glauben*, this dialogue is the text that, among the early works, uses more effectively both the notion of *Glauben* and the notion of *Offenbarung* to define how existence manifests itself and what existence is. Obviously, as with the *Spinozabriefe*, we do not have enough space to delineate the many issues that the dialogue offers. We will just select a few passages that are beneficial for our purposes.

So far, we have seen that the notion of *Offenbarung* emerges from Jacobi's analytical method of inquiry into the concept of existence, an examination that leaves no room for a synthetic construction of definitions. We will now look into the same notion to analyze some important theses concerning the subject's relation to existence. This trajectory will help us understand Jacobi's interpretation of *Dasein*. It will appear that *Dasein*, more than being a characteristic of any given object—as the pre-critical Kant and Jacobi after him seemed to maintain—shows itself as the subject's proper activity. Our route will eventually lead us to the connection between Jacobi's early speculation about existence and his theory about the so-called divine things, as it is advanced in his last published text, *On Divine Things and their Revelation* (1811).

As is now common knowledge, Jacobi's notion of *Glauben* critically draws on Hume's notion of faith, eventually to oppose Hume's skepticism. But beside Jacobi's interaction with Hume's epistemology, the point that Jacobi holds onto pertains to a general definition of faith: faith,

[209] F.H. Jacobi, "Spinozabriefe". In *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. George di Giovanni (Montréal: McGill-Queen University Press), p. 234.

as Hume maintains, consists "not in the peculiar nature or order of ideas, but in the *manner* of their conception."[210] To be sure, *Glauben* states that the external thing that the "I" perceives is "a being external to us, one that is independent of our representation, and only *perceived* by us."[211] In short, faith does not target the *Gegenstand*; rather, it pertains to the *Dasein* of the *Gegenstand*. We do not have "faith in" an object, yet we have "faith in" the existence of that object. The process of cognition may well begin its constitutive and synthetic manufacturing afterwards, but the condition of cognition does not fall prey to the same process. The conclusion might appear as a dubious subtlety; instead, it pinpoints the special commitment that faith carries. In fact, Jacobi distinguishes his philosophical investigation from other kinds of epistemological discourses precisely on the ground of the metaphysical goal that his usage of the term "faith" unearths. Jacobi deals with the existence that any *Dasein* possesses. But, at the same time, *Glauben* shows how *Dasein* is not merely the "through which" (as in the pre-critical Kant) something is revealed; *Glauben* refers to the "element" that constitutes the entirety of existence, objective and subjective.

Moreover, faith does not open our understanding towards as ultimate, sacred object. Nor does it welcome any other kind of phenomenon. *Glauben* refers to something different than the simple manner in which we apprehend an object because it does not simply take over the function usually assigned to perception. In fact, faith points to something that evades the sheer boundaries of perception and involves the whole spectrum of human activity, for faith is the "element of all cognition and *action.*"[212]

More than the immediacy of manifestation, the subjective relation to *Offenbarung* is key to understanding the principle of cognition. The notion of *Glauben* further expands our comprehension of existence in light of its reference to the totality of the subjective involvement in revealed

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210 F.H. Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. George di Giovanni (Montréal: McGill-Queen University Press), p. 271.
211 F.H. Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. George di Giovanni (Montréal: McGill-Queen University Press), p. 273.
212 F.H. Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. George di Giovanni (Montréal: McGill-Queen University Press), p. 272. Italics is mine.

existence. In other terms, *Glauben* affects our discourse about existence because it affirms that existence is not only immediately revealed as the fundament of any given object, but as it pertains to our activity as subjects as well.

Since the notion of *Dasein* cannot be explained scientifically but can be only analyzed metaphysically, Jacobi first uses the notion of *Offenbarung* to assert how analysis has brought the epistemology of understanding to turn towards a new philosophical vocabulary. But—and this is remarkable—Jacobi uses *Glauben* in order to show that *Dasein* is not merely an objective "through which" we know, but also the subjective "through which" we act. We act, as well as know, through existence. The apparent platitude of this conclusion stands in contrast with the seminal character of its consequences.

The immediacy of existence states not only the priority of revelation in the process of knowing the world around us, but also it affirms that existence is the core of our actuality (or *Würklich*-keit, as he writes in *David Hume*) as subjects. Jacobi maintains: "It seems to me that whoever has doubts about this only need to think of his dreams. Whenever we dream, we are in some state of madness. The principle of all cognition, of all feeling of truth, of every correct combination, *the perception of the actual*, abandons us, and the moment it forsakes us, or ceases to dominate, we can make things (i.e. the representations that we take as things, as happens in dreams) rhyme in the wildest fashion."[213]

The problem of freedom

Dasein is the only thing that prevents us from making things and actions rhyme in the wildest fashion. In different places of his works Jacobi clearly holds epistemological and moral

[213] F.H. Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. George di Giovanni (Montréal: McGill-Queen University Press), p. 303.

madness in contempt, so as to shrink back from such a boundless being that has no actual identity or limits. The limitless *apeiron*, as he identifies it, in which every single identity is obliterated, contradicts both common experience and pure conceivability. It posits a *Kette* of beings with neither beginning nor end. The nihilistic essence of this scientific view—as Jacobi defines it—has embodied the compulsion to continuity where interruption is banned and concrete existence is annihilated. According to this limitless scientific *apeiron*, both end and beginning are the pointless luxury of fanatic religious belief.

Conversely, Jacobi sees in the actual being an anchor to reality; the *Wirklich* carries the burden of keeping both knowledge and actions within the real, and it prevents us from dissolving them in the harmful illusion of science. Not that we cannot conceive a different panorama for actions and knowledge than the one Jacobi defends. Up until the end of his life, his thought took shape in a polemic against different forms of that *apeiron*, but he also recognizes the integrity of such an illusion. Nevertheless, Jacobi's theory of *Dasein* points to what frees the human world from its dependency on what does not comply with its highest (though not sole) form: the concrete true, good, and beautiful. Unfortunately, no system can emerge from that. But this is no surprise for metaphysics. Jacobi's notion of existence is the element revealed to us by our special faculty of perception, which guides our faith in acting and in acquiring knowledge of external reality. The essential trait of both actions and objects is thus defined around Jacobi's understanding of what a true principle is: existence is absolute beginning.

This decisive characteristic of *Dasein* should not be confused with other kinds of principles, like the first number of a series, or the first definition of a theorem. In contrast to the pre-critical Kant, Jacobi's understanding of existence stresses how existence cannot simply be the ultimate condition of possibility. In order to be the real "through which" everything else happens and is thought, existence should be more than a condition, it has to be an active principle, the absolute beginning whose most irreducible trait is spontaneity.

So, we can re-frame our interpretative progress as follows. The absolute beginning of my cognition of reality lies in existence as long as the object before my senses is the absolute beginning of my knowledge. To capture the real (and not illusory) identity of the object that stands in front of me, the object must be conceived as independent from both its relations to other objects and to myself as a knowing subject. By the same token, I need to be deemed responsible for the meaning of my deeds; they should not represent the fulfillment of a universal law guiding my activity, but they should manifest the virtue of a true creator. Both realities, objective reality and subjective reality, are therefore freed from the *Kette* of being that systemic thinking purports. In more simple terms, *Dasein* is pure spontaneity. This is perhaps the ultimate definition of *Dasein*. Our faculty to perceive this spontaneity is the highest faculty of our intimate sense, threatened to be blinded by our enthusiasm for explanations, but eventually unburdened by our impulse to give birth to an exhaustive doctrine.

The character of Jacobi's texts shows here the reason for their polemical nature: Jacobi's intellectual attitude seems always to react to systematic philosophy only because his ideas are persuasive as long as they emerge out of unresolved issues of systematic thinking. The same idea of the spontaneity of *Dasein* is expounded in the writing that better analyzes the perfect geometry designed to annihilate existence. Jacobi dedicates himself to describe the unmatched freedom of *Dasein* in a work devoted to the analysis of the true cradle of modern scientific thinking, Spinoza's *Ethics*. Spontaneity is one of the main topics of the second edition of the *Spinozabriefe*, where he analyzes the problem of human identity by expounding the real character of freedom.

The problem of freedom thus provides a good example of Jacobi's polemical stance, but it says much—as we will see—about the nature of freedom itself. Jacobi delves into the conundrum of this notion by opposing and developing two strains of propositions: twenty-three in support of the thesis "Man does not have freedom," and twenty-nine in defense of the antithesis "Man has freedom."

Their correctness depends on the kind of existence we take to be true: the thesis (*Man does not have freedom*) is based on the first proposition of its set: "The possibility of the existence of all things known to us is supported by, and refers to, the coexistence of other individual things. We are not in a position to form the representation of a being that subsists completely on its own."[214] The antithesis (*Man has freedom*)—which shows Jacobi's own position—lies on the opposite assumption regarding existence:

> It is undeniable that the existence of all finite things rests on coexistence, and that we are not in a position to form the representation of a being that subsists completely on its own. It is equally undeniable however, that we are even less in a position to form the representation of an absolutely dependent being. Such a being would have to be entirely passive. Yet it *could* not be passive, since anything that is not already something cannot simply be *determined* to be something…indeed, not even a relation is possible with respect to it.[215]

With respect to freedom, it might appear as if Jacobi presents an antinomy like Kant did in his *Critique of Practical Reason*, which was published only one year earlier. But Jacobi's argument is not antinomic in nature, nor does it refer to the dialectic between freedom and happiness as the Kantian practical antinomy does. Jacobi does not confront the problem of the connection between the noumenal and historical side of the subject as in Kant's *Critique*. Nevertheless, as in the case of Kant's analysis of the antinomies of *pure* reason—on whose structure the antinomy of practical reason lies—Jacobi's two sets of propositions allude to the general necessity of assuming an unconditional principle for our knowledge to be consistent.

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214 F.H. Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. George di Giovanni (Montréal: McGill-Queen University Press), p. 341.
215 F.H. Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. George di Giovanni (Montréal: McGill-Queen University Press), p. 344.

Thus, instead of developing two conflicting lines of reasoning out of two antithetical assumptions, Jacobi explains the antithesis (*Man has freedom*) in light of the problems that arise from the notion of co-existence, as it is presented in the thesis (*Man does not have freedom*). Therefore, Jacobi's argumentative strategy shows the dependence of his ideas about freedom on their opposite: they are, in fact, defined through contrast. But this strategy is not just Jacobi's usual need for constructive polemic mentioned above; it rather shows the proper definition of spontaneity. In fact, in the end, Jacobi's reasoning stretches over 52 propositions showing the advantage of assuming independent existence as the basis of reality and promoting the rational superiority of spontaneity in defining existence.

"Completely mediated existence is not conceivable," reads proposition XXV;[216] complete mediation—i.e. absolute co-existence—would produce an "*Unding*," (literally, a no-thing) because the network of relations that would support the determination of a single thing would completely annihilate the singularity of the thing in question. But, likewise, it is equally impossible to know an absolutely independent thing, for the rejection of any relation would make the determination of a thing impossible.[217] Thus, my thinking needs both relation and independence to determine the peculiar status of the spontaneous interaction between entities.

Since Jacobi's apparent dialectic is not an antinomy, his solution is similar neither to Kant's solution to the antinomies of the pure reason nor to the solution of the antinomy of practical reason. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that while Kant applies different strategies to solve the antinomies of the pure reason, a group of them, the dynamical antinomies, provides a significant backdrop to decipher the connection between co-existence and independent existence that Jacobi's notion of spontaneity involves.

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216 F.H. Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. George di Giovanni (Montréal: McGill-Queen University Press), p. 344.
217 F.H. Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. George di Giovanni (Montréal: McGill-Queen University Press), p. 345.

If in the case of the mathematical antinomies of pure reason, Kant shows that both thesis and antithesis are *wrong* because of the confusion between phenomenon and noumenon when the unconditioned is assumed as an object of experience, in the case of the dynamical antinomies of pure reason Kant *positively* certifies a distinct domain for each of the claims (the laws of nature/freedom, and existence/non-existence of unconditioned being). In the case of the dynamical antinomies of pure reason, our reason is rescued from the conflict in the moment Kant shows how transcendental idealism provides reason with two distinct domains: the phenomenal in which the mechanism of nature rules, and the noumenal that makes free actions possible.

Apparently, Jacobi opposes this strategy, although he accepts the double planes of reality in which human beings exist. In fact, his analysis of the thesis *Man has freedom* leads him to conclude that autonomous action seems to be as unacceptable as absolute dependence. In the end, since both thesis and antithesis are not entirely wrong, this conflict—either nature or freedom, either co-existence or absolute beginning—appears as if it called for the same solution as the one introduced by Kant in the dynamical antinomies. But Jacobi immediately shows dissatisfaction with the twofold reality that transcendental idealism eventually offers, although freedom and necessity need to be taken together.

Jacobi finds a way out: the notion of freedom is *defined* by correlations that any *Dasein* must sustain in the phenomenal world, but, at the same time, *Dasein* is *not conditioned* by its relations: "this autonomous activity is called *freedom* inasmuch as it can be opposed to (*entgegen setzten*), and can prevail over (*überwiegen kann*), the mechanism which constitutes the *sensible* existence of an individual being (*Dasein*)."[218] Jacobi cannot but recognize the absolute dependence of existence on co-existence; but at the same time, he affirms the absolute independence of existence when it comes to the proper understanding of what is *certain* about it, beyond doubts or

[218] F.H. Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. George di Giovanni (Montréal: McGill-Queen University Press), p. 345.

progressive knowledge. This reign of certainty is secured only if the activity, the *Wirklich* of the *Dasein*, is the absolute beginning.

In the end, the absolute beginning labors its way out of nothing and defeats the nihilism of a purely materialistic order of reality. For Jacobi freedom is equal to spontaneity, which identifies the character of an entity that gives birth to its own action. True freedom is mirrored by action that does not provide legitimation via explanation, for action emerges from nothing while being ready to plunge again into nothing. It echoes the pulse of a purely living being. Jacobi is thorough in conceiving the spontaneity of freedom as it is showed by the lack of reasons that freedom displays: free action is not prompted by law or desire.[219] In contrast to Kant, Jacobi does not claim that moral law is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom because true freedom rejects universal justification. Since existence receives its fundamental trait from the spontaneity of its unbidden acting, this nothingness surrounding absolute beginning is the only horizon for true existence to be. The independence of the will is, in fact, not based on the practical law[220] but is rather based on a "divine element" that produces human "virtue" experienced with an ultimate "feeling of honour".[221]

With his notion of existence Jacobi faces the problem raised by Kant's discussion of the "Third Conflict of the Transcendental Ideas," the so-called third cosmological antinomy, related to "unconditioned causality."[222] This conflict is the theoretical basis for the antinomy of practical reason, and it represents the fundamental background to Jacobi's notion of spontaneity. And now that Jacobi's peculiar way of proceeding is more explicit, one can understand why, for Jacobi, freedom is not just a transcendental problem. The beginning conceived as absolute beginning is not only what must be presupposed *a priori* for a certain chain of events to be identified; rather it is the only thing that we experience when we are 'given' a phenomenon to know, and it is also what

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219 Cf. F.H. Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. George di Giovanni (Montréal: McGill-Queen University Press), p. 345.
220 Cf. F.H. Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. George di Giovanni (Montréal: McGill-Queen University Press), p. 517.
221 F.H. Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. George di Giovanni (Montréal: McGill-Queen University Press), p. 348.
222 I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 486.

happens when we ‘give’ shape to an action. Jacobi’s epistemological and ethical concerns concur in aiming to save this true form of reality from dangerous illusions.

Jacobi would agree with Kant in considering absolute freedom as the “real stumbling block for philosophy;”[223] but if freedom represents the “stumbling block for philosophy,” Jacobi feels confident in abandoning modern thinking to give voice to a *Dasein* for which freedom is not a problem but its undisputable essence. He would therefore require his reader to stick to the reality of freedom and reject the abstractions of philosophy.

Concluding remarks

Are Jacobi's discomfort and reaction simply a display of his craving for a retreat from teh coming of modern thinking, or do they show evidence of what the history of modern thinking itself was about to call upon in its ensuing developments? Is this attentive reader of classical German philosophy just quitting his age, or is he foreshadowing the awakening of an ancient judgment that was about to break the illusions of the system while taking the shape of a new question?

A few indications signal that Jacobi was coming closer to one of the contemporary ways that define humans’ task of revealing the truth about existence. But beside this general understanding that would associate Jacobi's philosophy with a tradition that goes from Kierkegaard to Heidegger, what strikes the most is that the task of revealing the truth about existence sets the individual permanently apart from any other kind of object, making his *Dasein* untold in a world conceived in the form of relatedness and co-existence. This surely does not allow us to put Jacobi in dialogue with Kierkegaard or Heidegger directly, but a few remarks on this matter will definitely help us consider Jacobi’s efforts in a more fruitful light. In fact, the singularity of Jacobi’s philosophy

[223] I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 486.

appears less equivocal once we peruse a few pages of Heidegger's interpretation of certain ancient Greek fragments; it is in fact with the help of Heidegger that Jacobi's exceptional character in the panorama of German philosophy attains a more defined profile. In Heidegger's analysis of Heraclitus' fragments, light is shed on the function that human being fulfills in saving reality from shapeless relatedness, making of Jacobi's theory of freedom an unexpected herald of this late development.

In a famous course held in 1966-1967, Martin Heidegger and Eugen Fink led participants through the difficult interpretation of Heraclitus' fragments. More than the two seminars on Heraclitus given at the University of Freiburg over the summers of 1943 and 1944, this course offered Heidegger several opportunities to reflect upon his own thought while moving his steps both from and towards Heraclitus' fragment 64: "Lightning steers the universe" (*τα δε πάντα οιακίζει Κεραυνός*).[224] As the course develops, the core theme of fragment 64 appears in all clarity: the ancient metaphysical problem of the relation between the *one* and the *many*. The lightning, the one, is separated and detached from the rest of reality; its overwhelming power is alien to the objects that it dazzles. Its sudden appearance illuminates the world; this world, the many, eludes the bleak night of haziness to gain form and sharpness only under the sudden blaze of that superior power.

The relation between the one and the many is a distinct topic that keeps animating discussion throughout the course, even when seemingly absent. In general, we may maintain that the one is not conceived as the sum total of the many taken together, nor is it conceived as a singled-out part of the many. Instead, the one lies outside the "relatedness" that keeps the many together; this is what makes the one, *one*. In the text of the course lectures, it looks as if Heraclitus and Heidegger jointly addressed the climax of the tension that the one produces when it relates to the many: not in relation, the one and the many vanish. If the one and the many do not oppose each

[224] Cf. Heidegger 1994. For the English translation I remain faithful to the rendering offered by C.H Seibert in his edition of M. Heidegger and E. Fink's *Heraclitus Seminar 1966/67*.

other, the one disappears and the many becomes the *whole*; and in the whole, any identity loses its distinct contours. For this reason, the peculiar status of the one, which can be simply described as the "bringing forth" of the many, is repeatedly indicated. Heraclitus and Heidegger seem to join forces in giving "lightning" the function of being that one, which is nothing but the subject that, while relating to the many, remains outside of it. Heraclitus and Heidegger suspend the process that causes the relation between one and many to dissolve, hold the one and the many separated in order to look into their identity and mutual alliance.

On the one hand, the universe that the many presents is "quintessential relatedness," it is all what it is; on the other hand, the lightning is what, by appearing, reveals the single identity of each thing that the many includes.[225] At the same time, the lightning actually reveals its diversity from both the many and the single objects included in the many. The lightning is not part of the many. The lightning fulfills the function of revealing identities[226] and, by doing so, confirms its diversity from them. This is why the relation that each item of the many has with its other is not the same relation that the one, the lightning, establishes with the many. The relation that the one establishes with the many is not included in the relatedness of the universe; it is rather the action of bringing to light the parts of the many that would otherwise fall into indistinct wholeness.[227]

The action of the lightning is the destiny of the *Dasein* that human being is. This destiny makes of human being the lone ruler over the existence of things. Human being is revealed in its essence once it is caught while bringing forth existence, distinctness, identities.[228] *Dasein* governs over existence because it provides means to save the relatedness from disappearing in shapeless darkness and gives the universe the form of a cosmic order.

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[225] Cf. M. Heidegger and E. Fink, *Heraclitus Seminar 1966/67*, (Alabama: The Alabama University Press, 1979), p. 10.
[226] Cf. M. Heidegger and E. Fink, *Heraclitus Seminar 1966/67*, (Alabama: The Alabama University Press, 1979), p. 21.
[227] Cf. M. Heidegger and E. Fink, *Heraclitus Seminar 1966/67*, (Alabama: The Alabama University Press, 1979), p. 134.
[228] Cf. M. Heidegger and E. Fink, *Heraclitus Seminar 1966/67*, (Alabama: The Alabama University Press, 1979), pp. 127 and ff..

But cosmic order does not affect the law of the lightning. With the same solitary status, Jacobi's subject seems to perform the same function of lightning, that addresses relatedness but only insofar as the it rules over reality without being essentially conditioned by it. In the end, Jacobi's notion of freedom seems to introduce a constant reminder of the responsibility of the one. This responsibility can only be lived with the tension of a self-conscious isolation, lest the dissolution of the I occurs in the appearing of an *apeiron*.

Conclusion

These concluding remarks are meant to provide a list of five key theses that show the interpretative achievements of the preceding. These theses can be used as lenses to augment those aspects of the *Divine Things* that, we believe, best characterize Jacobi's final efforts toward a new understanding of human epistemological and moral domains. The concise form of what follows tries not only to accommodate the reader's need for a brief summary of what has so far been achieved, but it also meets the need of gauging the real height of Jacobi's philosophy, which shows its prominence not in consistency of structure but in its power of revealing territories that modern thinking left seemingly uncharted. Judging the value of those theoretical findings, if any, is not our current purpose; nevertheless, we regard them from the point of view of what they might introduce, and not on the basis of what they disregard. The following five theses suggest what we think should be remembered of Jacobi's *Divine Things*; they will put us in a position to discuss the overall profile of the text. Indubitably, the completeness of this list is itself a thesis of the present Dissertation.

I.

Freedom is the power to change from rest to motion without being influenced by external factors. Such a simple definition suits the weight borne by subjects. The decision to act lawfully or unjustly, according to a "feeling of honor" or following universal paradigms, pledging oneself to the acceptance of divine love or divesting of true value anything but earthly happiness, following natural impulses or claiming to govern over them, surely determines the subject's ethics but will not affect its essence. Not primarily. At first, the subject is defined by a state that denotes its singularity inasmuch as it can oppose both rest and motion respectively: either by putting its motion to rest, or by starting to move. The power to resist or oppose is the defining trait of subjectivity. This may look like a simplistic definition, but it has far-reaching consequences.

Freedom is the sole condition for a subject to be; neither rational needs nor material circumstances affect this state of being; only freedom to decide does. Though determined by a natural environment, while abiding by the laws of science or following a divine order, the subject's inner self will always be defined as a free agent that can oppose everything; or, better, the subject has the faculty to oppose everything but itself. The subject is, in fact, a rigid consciousness without internal fractions; and this certainty never leaves the subject.

Notwithstanding its power, freedom does not locate the subject in a point of balance; equidistant and impartial. Nor does it portray an unbiased entity ready to give birth to any kind of action. The subject does not stretch its identity or deeds unlimitedly. Jacobi's notion of freedom is not just a pure free-will that decides to take one form of existence among many others equally available. The subject's freedom is not equal to an undetermined freedom of choice. It is true that the subject's freedom is not *determined* by anything, but it is nevertheless *conditioned* by the subject's distinct status. Freedom is tied to the nature of the subject: its creatural essence. This might seem as to be a restriction that devalues the abovementioned subject's ability to self-directing in the process of opposing anything, but it is quite the contrary.

The creatural nature is what makes the subject able to oppose or promote any action. This status saves the subject from being part of a set of actions that preexists and supersedes itself. And this freedom from what preexists and supersedes the singularity of the subject is what makes the subject free to decide absolutely to move or to rest. This status of freedom from systematic reality is obtained only through the relation to God, which makes the subject transcend what preexists and supersedes its actions. Yet, the subject is not a creature of heaven; on the contrary, the subject lays claim to citizenship of this middle kingdom, between the transcendence of God and the systematicity of phenomenal reality.

To stress even more this essentially human character, we need to signal that even the subject's relation to God consists in opposition. The subject is not obliged by any law to answer to God either. In fact, the subject is liberated from being part of a natural system of objects in light of its capacity

to establish an equally opposing relationship to God. Although God is a higher substance than the human subject, the subject is still an "I" in front of this almighty "Thou." The subject does not transcend its creatural status by merging with God; it remains an individual "I", as much as it remains an individual "I" in the middle of the natural, systematic chain of phenomena.

When, in the end, the subject's actions will take shape among the objects of the world, they will necessarily be biased, determined, and regulated. When the subject will organize reality according to its will, reality will be defined and regulated according to the laws of "determining and comparing" that bring about the design of a cosmic geometry. In the moment it performs its action, the subject enters the modes of production, its laws, and its spatio-temporal dimensions. Freedom will eventually disappear in the very moment actions will be performed; it will become the mere backdrop of an undefined principle invisible to knowledge, definitions, and human record.

The subject's nature is, in the end, this self-limiting attitude that places itself at distance from the natural world in light of its dependence on the transcendent world; but, at the same time, the subject does not belong to the first, as much as it does not feel at home in the latter. Its essence is built around a negation that says "I." As a consequence, freedom is just the manifestation of an utter finitude that has the will to act according to the beauty of divine measure. As Jacobi writes: "Above the animal kingdom, as above the entire kingdom of nature which embraces both the animate and inanimate beings, rises the **kingdom of spirits**. The love of beauty and goodness reigns over intention and knowledge. Wisdom and **providence** reign over it. This is the highest property of the spirit: that destiny does not prevail over it, but rather, **it** prevails over destiny. The power of this feature establishes the spirit as creator; its power to create matches its freedom. Within it, the degree of the first is equal to the degree of the latter."[229]

[229] F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 88.

The kingdom of spirits is the sole ontological plane of reality that utters the nature of mankind for "[w]e can ascribe freedom to ourselves, in so far as we are aware that there is strength in us designed towards the good, able to engage any opposition (*Widerstand*). "[230]

II.

"Usually, rational knowledge is deemed justified knowledge. But we know on the basis of fundaments only when the axiom, the whole is necessarily equal to the sum of its parts, suits singular cases".[231] Justified knowledge is a product of a specific kind of worldview, which is assumed in reply to our urge for explanations. One can provide an explanation only as long as the thing that is demonstrated is part of a whole: "I demonstrate by indicating the place or location that a determinate part necessarily occupies in a defined whole. What is not a part of a whole, is neither demonstrable nor deducible. If something is *included, we affirm it*, if it is *excluded, we negate it.*"[232]

On the one hand, the preeminent assumption of a scientific worldview reads as follows: "by *fundaments* [or reasons] we mean nothing but the set, the totality of determinations of an object."[233] On the other hand, defining one determination of an object implies the same principle: it involves the totality of passages (negating, comparing, combining predicates) that brought about the single determination of said object. In different terms, identity (of either one object or one of its determinations) must always be conceived on the basis of its parts, and those parts are nothing but the result of a process of abstraction from the singularity that we want to determine. Therefore, if the parts of a single object are those universal predicates through which that very object is defined, and if those predicates are products of a process of abstraction that produces segments of reality, we can no longer distinguish a singular object from its universal predicates. Objects turn into a system made of permutations, combinations, and oppositions which together portray reality essentially, but not

[230] F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 56.
[231] F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 114.
[232] F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 115.
[233] F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*, 115.

truly. In fact, this system includes only a list of universals which is of no help in locating and determining the very singular object. Hence, Kant's and Spinoza's accomplishments harmonize in one sole project of modern subjection and obliteration of the true.

III.

The cause of an event is mistakenly confused with the material fundament of it, as if the material composition of that event brought about the identity of it. This mistake is at the origin of fatalism: reality appears from merging cause and effect in one sole substance that moves from itself and in itself. Separation of two moments (A and B) in temporal succession—cause (A) and effect (B)—is deemed scientifically unconceivable because scientific explanations transform successions in time into simultaneous sequences. Scientific explanations interpret succession in time as a frozen connection, whereby A and B do not occur separately but relate uninterruptedly. The simultaneous sum total of parts becomes the only reality that is scientifically determined, because the form of scientific knowledge maintains that cause and effect are concurrently given. In truth, separation in time is what scientific explanations abolish. Every gap is filled and the very notion of succession turns to be the superficial deception of an immature understanding. "Totum parte prius esse necesse est" is the principle that guides scientific explanations.[234] After assuming that succession in time is scientifically inconceivable, reason paralyzes movement, and provides a perfect, cosmic synchronicity.

Nevertheless, succession in time is evident. How do we justify the utter evidence of becoming in time? How to demonstrate the truthfulness of temporal succession and the reality of cause-effect events if scientific demonstrations revoke the very possibility of succession? The cause-effect

[234] Cf. F.H. Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. George di Giovanni (Montréal: McGill-Queen University Press), p. 288.

principle rejects both demonstration and justification, concludes Jacobi: it is a divine thing. The notion of succession in time cannot be *demonstrated*; it can only be *showed*.[235]

IV.

In the *Divine Things*, Jacobi's remarks on the divinity of reality seem to invoke the metaphysical undertakings of the pre-critical Kant, for whom metaphysics shows analytically—i.e. negatively—what cannot be demonstrated. Metaphysics thus seems to carry on with showing what is scientifically inconceivable by using *elenctic* method. By the same token, metaphysics seems to profile the perimeter of reality using a language that will always make appeal to the limits of that very same perimeter. We may sustain that metaphysics does not provide a description of the world; it rather is the discipline that considers our relation to the principle of that world. It *points at* the absolute principle that presents itself in the form of free actions, creation, singular identities; in one word: the principle of existence. But metaphysics will never demonstrate or justify that principle. Jacobi's reformation of some philosophical terms (faculty of perception, faculty of revelation, virtue, true vs truth, non-philosophy, faith, etc.) tries to reach out to that principle of reality which, he admits, admits of no doctrinal knowledge. In point of fact, there is not knowledge in metaphysics. Metaphysics becomes a project that human beings cast upon reality following the impulse of human internal self-perception. It is nothing more than a project crafted according to this inner feeling, which represents the only metaphysical "evidence".

But human beings are not capable of sharing the experience of this intimate relation to the principle, as they cannot justify metaphysical evidence. There cannot be explicit and universal agreement upon the objects of metaphysics. Hence a religious worship is what expects subjects claiming to sense the "true" behind the "truth."

[235] See Appendix C of F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*.

V.

Religious faith is thus a virtue or, better, it is the only virtue of human beings.[236] This special kind of virtue is exercised over time and never gets frustrated with repetition. It rather brings human beings to the recognition of their finitude. Virtue does not improve like a craft; it does not progressively emancipate humans from their battle against the dangerous illusion of systematic thinking; it rather takes shape and meaning only as the fight against the system of reality flares up. Virtue springs from the opposition that subjects feel in their own selves, though no satisfaction will welcome at the end of this demanding task. No peaceful reward is disguised behind the onerous journey that Jacobi requires humans to take, because happiness lies just in this feeling of ownership that humans have of themselves.

The more human beings accept their creatural state that places them in a middle plane of reality - never really immanent, but never really transcendent either - the stronger this special virtue defines their identity as opposing, conflicting "I"s. Their freedom lives only in that opposition, which rhymes with finitude.

[236] See Appendix B of F.H. Jacobi, *Divine Things*.

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Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi

On the Divine Things and their Revelation

(1811)

From *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi*, *Werke*

Hrsg. von Klaus Hammacher und Walter Jaeschke

Hamburg, Meiner.

Bd. 3, *Schriften zur Streit um die göttlichen Dinge und ihre Offenbarung*

Hrsg. von Walter Jaeschke, 2000, pp. 3-134.

"There are unperceptive times, but what is eternal always finds its time."

Joh. von Müller

"Divine things are infinitely superior to nature; only God can put them into the soul. He wanted them to enter from the heart into the mind, and not from the mind into the heart. Hence, if human matters have to be known before they can be loved, you have to love divine matters in order to know them."

Pascal

Preface to the second edition

Universally known are both the great passion the publication of *On Divine Things and their Revelation* generated at its first appearing, and the inveterate insults his author suffered. Now, as then, I stand my ground to let the work defend itself and its author. *On Divine Things and their Revelation* appears here, in the complete edition of my works, as in its first edition; not even a syllable has been changed. I just want my work to be handed down to posterity, and I want to be judged by it. I know no doubt what I am; nobody can take it away from me or give me what I am not, like the old saying of the righteous connoisseur of the world and men Duclos goes: “only one's reputation can be made or destroyed.”

As regards the specific reproof of the *Divine Things*, according to which the doctrines of the philosophy of nature or philosophy of identity have maliciously been deformed, intentionally altered, and apparently falsified, many experts have justified my writing so satisfactorily without my intervention that I have no worries about it. I am referring to ‘Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen’, 1812 n.72, to ‘Hallische allgemeine Literaturzeitung’, 1812 n.56, to ‘Heidelbergische Jahrbücher’, 1812 n.22, and to ‘Leipziger Literaturzeitung’, 1812 nn.90, 91, 92.

It would be easy to add more evidence to support those positive assessments, e.g. no one mentioned the review of Fichte's *On the Essence of the Scholar* signed F.W.J.S. published in ‘Jenaische Literaturzeitung’, 1806 nn.150-151 which, after all, is so pertinent as to be enough to prove what had to be shown.

* * *

An excerpt of the present text has been misinterpreted and read in such an antithetical way by a group of highly respected readers that I need to admit my responsibility.

It is a passage in which the Messenger, full of enthusiasm for Christ's personhood as this is presented in the Gospels, is compared to the *detached* philosopher, who refuses to get excited about any personhood whatsoever as he considers the concept, the idea, thoroughly enough and therefore detrimental or, at best, idolatrous. Consulted about a self-contradiction statement, the Messenger has to be solicited by the detached man's statement—who acts like a pure idealist rebuffing any light that comes from outside—to respond in order to show if he contradicts himself or if the same criticism pertains—maybe even more—to those detractors who facilitated the philosopher's attack.

This plan fails. Instead of putting effort into it, the Messenger responds to the detached philosopher's bittersweet statement and to his haughty kindness silently smiling and bowing.

At this point the author of the *Divine Things* puts himself between the Messenger and the detached philosopher, and firmly—I suppose—stresses the absurdity of the latter's allegation against the former. He cannot demonstrate that the allegations against the Messenger stand for nothing though he finds himself siding with him, more so than with the idealist, like the following text—which here assumes a new shift—displays in a way that is: clearer, more distinct, and comprehensive. In this text, the one who prays devoutly in front of an unrefined sacred image is considered superior to the philosopher who wants to kneel down only in front of his own vague idea of God, but cannot do it.

The author's attitude manifests itself clearly by way of the curt manner—like Epictetus—in which he *brushes off* the idealist, regardless of what will immediately follow and go until the end of the first part of this work, which sharply puts the integral *internalists* (*ganz Inwendigen*) and the **integral externalists** (*ganz Auswendigen*) in contrast, head to head.

Epictetus dealt with a category of philosophers of whom he says in discourse XXI that they proceed solemnly as if they swallowed an obelisk, and that they would love that anybody crossing path with them formed a high opinion of them and declared: “what a great philosopher!” The rude words, quoted directly from discourse XXII, are: “What shall I say to this slave? If I am silent, he

will burst. I must speak in this way: ‘Excuse me, as you would excuse lovers; I am not my own master; I am mad’”[237].

The author could not imagine that some reader was mistaken here and, instead of recollecting Plato's *mania*, assumed the peculiar opinion that the author had made fun not of the detached and self-sufficient philosopher, but of the Messenger who was really inspired by divine feelings and ideas. The clear purpose of the author's work is to show, in the most evident way, that the *pure* religious idealist and the *pure* religious materialist opposes themselves only like the two valves of the oyster, which shelters the pearl of Christianity. Neither the Messenger nor his friend, the author of the *Divine Things*, want such a division, they want the pearl. They are diverse only for their opinions about the value of both the oyster and its valves, which means that the historical faith of the one is not the historical faith of the other. The author of the *Divine Things* believes that the history of Christianity involves the entire history of humankind, which includes the former; the Messenger seems to have the opposite opinion. The author does not intend to start here a new debate on this subject matter: in his work he has already expressed his opinion with accuracy, frankness, and consideration for the numerous paths and means of divine revelation to human beings, while expressing the best of his knowledge. He regards as happy those on whom a brighter light and more stable and happier certitude are bestowed. Those who want to challenge him are welcomed; he will not meet them head-on, for he is convinced that anybody who picks up this book without prejudices and reads it entirely will do justice to the intention from which it springs. The authors could just not tolerate, without responding out loud, the criticism that he had done injustice to a man that he himself highly esteemed, to his old friend, the Messenger of Wandsbeck.

[237] *Discourses of Epictetus*, tr. by G. Long (New York: Appleton, 1904).

Necessary Foreword

The following text took shape as a report for the *Unparteiischen Correspondenten* that I offered my friend Perthes to introduce the sixth (VI) volume of the complete works of the Messenger of Wandsbeck.

I knew that I was not cut out for this kind of work. But I was accommodating enough to promise to make at least an effort on condition that a space of all eight columns of the journal's supplement be devoted to my report. This was granted without any resistance. However, this was not enough. I was granted two, then three, then fours times the initial space, and eventually as much as I would need.

To settle the issue and gain the necessary room for the advancement of my work, which had led me far beyond the limits of a review, I asked Herr Perthes to apologize once and for all on my behalf to the *Hamburgischen Correspondenten* and then to publish my essay, which I wanted to hasten bringing to completion, on its own under the title of:

An Unsuccessful Attempt for a Partial Review of the Complete Works of the Messenger of Wandsbeck, for the Impartial Hamburgischen Correspondenten.

The suggestion was accepted and the printing of the ***Unsuccessful Attempt*** actually began. The work had to be published by the fair of the third Sunday after Easter of 1798, and indeed it was announced in the fair-catalogue among the books published that very year.

Fortuitously, the author, who was at the time wandering here and there, had to leave Hamburg and only by the end of the year was he once again in a position that allowed him to devote himself to intellectual work.

He had just picked up his interrupted work, to which little was missing for completion, when he got involved in the famous event that led the philosopher Fichte to be expelled from Jena. To this incident others would add; hence, the decision was eventually made to take the **unsuccessful attempt** in the literal sense, and condemn it to extinction.

I had already made use of some excerpts from it for the ***Letter to Fichte***[238]. I used even more excerpts from it at Reinhold's pressing request for an article for his *Contributions to an Easier Overview of the State of Philosophy at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century*.[239]

The first theft was insignificant and the stolen material could be retrieved with no harm from the *Letter to Fichte* on the occasion of a new edition. On the other hand, the other theft on behalf of Reinhold's *Contribution* was so considerable, and the material so re-worked by being moved from one place to the other[240], that nothing would have helped the writing that had suffered from it, suppose the author had again decided to bring it to completion, than, as things stood, a full re-write of its second part which had been the one stolen.

Repeated efforts to come to this decision had not been spared. As often as I had the occasion to read the first part of the work to some friends, or some excerpts from it, I was always exhorted not to leave it in such an unfinished state. But I was actually moved to the decision only by myself. Just how, let it for once be known in the future[241].

What has for so long made this decision difficult was less the arisen necessity to compose the second part anew than the impossibility to give to the first part a different form than the original. The text had to start very improperly with the words: **the reviewer, etc.**, otherwise the whole text could not be published.

At first, the chosen title «**An Unsuccessful Attempt for a Partial Review etc.**» settled every issue; but it was of no use after so many years.

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238 Jacobi to Fichte, Hamburg 1799.

239 See the third booklet: *Über das Unternehmen des Kriticismus, die Vernunft zu Verstande zu bringen, und der Philosophie überhaupt eine neue Absicht zu geben*.

240 See the *Vorbericht* of the aforementioned essay, pp. 1-5.

241 [Footnote not present in the first edition, added only in the second]. For the joy caused by the first part of ***Ideen zur Geschichte der Entwickelung des religiöse Glaubens*, by Kajetan Weiller**, published in May 1808, four years before the second and six years before the third part, I resolved and, so to speak, took the vow to bring to conclusion the text *On Divine Things*, and to get started at once and not to give up no matter what happens. A series of bitter setbacks that started to develop in those very years made me defer the realization of the purpose; the will and hope to complete the work had never abandoned me, not even for a moment. May this reference to Weiller's text serve to draw more attention to it. As for its value, I only refer to the report written on it in the *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* (n. 26, 1815), which anyone impartial, unbiased and free from prejudice towards the person, will acknowledge. In **serene spirit** I dedicated the first edition of *On Divine Things* to **the author of the *Ideen***, just as now I **publicly** dedicate them to him, since they belong, besides me, to nobody but him. I also know that he appreciates the text like I do. Thus, I raise this monument to the most pure and disinterested friendship.»

Yet is then a temporary astonishment what actually cannot appear for the Foreword prevents it?

The question is whether the author has **luckily** or **unluckily** strayed from a review of the sixth volume of the complete works of the Messenger of Wandsbeck to get lost in general considerations about **religious realism** and **idealism**, letter and spirit, revelation of the reason (*Vernunftoffenbarung*) and positive doctrine, and whether one is allowed to give such a heading to a whole line of reflections, now that they appear introduced by it.

The treatise about the Lichtenberg's Prophecy, which was published already once in paperback in 1802—not in its proper place—appears now as **Introduction**, which is I believe the appropriate place. I hope none of my readers will spurn to begin with it.

October 5th,1811.

Munich.

«**Our world will become so refined (*fein*) that it will be as ridiculous to believe in God,** as it is today to believe in ghosts».[242]

That was the prophecy of a departed. From the grave this voice sounds in all our hearts.

Oh, prophet! Did you only see this? Did you not also see what followed? Did you see nothing more, or did you simply not want to announce what comes next, its fulfillment?

The prophecy continues:

«**and then, once again after a while, the world will become even more refined (*feiner*). And it will pursue, now hurriedly, the highest summit of refinement. Once the peak reached, the judgement of the wise men will overturn once again; and knowledge will change for the last time. Thus—and this will be the end—we will again believe only in ghosts. We ourselves will be like God. We will know that being and essence are – and can only be – ghosts.**

At this time, the bitter sweat of seriousness will dry up from every forehead; from every eye the tears of longing will be wiped away, and laughing will sound out loud among men. Thus, since reason will have completed its work, mankind will have reached its destination: the same crown will adorn every transfigured head.»

If I am raving, then the prophet raved before me: if he announced the truth, then with his words mine also will be fulfilled.

The highest truth cannot be more true than the fact that **God lives**, as true as the fact that **a God** exists **in heaven**, i.e. independent, apart from and above nature, of which he is the free creator, its wise and amorous ruler; father of all beings (*Wesen*), with fatherly **sense** and **heart**. If this living God becomes in man's view a mere rainbow, so that in the clouds of human soul it shows itself through **refraction** and **collection**, then man will learn to deem God a psychological deception akin

[242] C.G. Lichtenberg, *Vermischte Schriften* (Göttingen: J. C. Dieterich, 1804) Vol. I, p. 166.

to that optical deceit: his entire knowledge has already taken this very route and will always have to be further idealized, as happens to the theory of the rainbow, until the **Epoptes**[243] will eventually hold as a war booty a universal nothing of knowledge—**but now manifest!**

There is not difference: necessarily, for such a man the entire creation goes lost together with the Creator. In his spirit these two destinies are inseparable. In his spirit, as soon as God becomes a ghost, so nature does, as well as the spirit itself. Hence, the **spirit** of man is that which recognizes **God**; he perceives it, he has the **presentiment** of it concealed in nature; he **learns** of God in his chest, he worships it in his heart. This is his **reason**: to him the existence (*Daseyn*) of a god is more manifest (*offenbarer*) and certain than his own. Reason is not where this revelation (*Offenbarung*) is not. Or: can you call reason what brought to **knowledge** only absurdity and mere delusion? Then reason would not be the faculty (*Vermögen*) of truth and wisdom, but of ignorance: a discerning **Not**-kowing, a discerning not **being**; a faculty of desperation, the worst of enemy's gifts.

Man's privilege consists—says the wise man from Stagira—in being able to know something higher and better than him.

Man finds himself as a being completely dependent, derived, concealed to himself: yet, he is enlivened by a drive to inquire into his origin, to recognize himself in it, to experience by himself **the true** (*das Wahre*) **through** this origin and **from** this origin. He calls **reason** this drive that identifies his kind.

The drive of every living being is the **light** of this being, it is its right and strength. Only in **this** light can it walk, and it can act (*wirken*) **only** out of this strength.

Every finite being owns within itself neither its life nor the flame of its **light** or the **force** of its heart. All beings are brought to life and revived by something **beyond themselves**; they **receive**

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[243] Contemplator: so would be called who had gone through all the degrees of initiation in the Eleusinian Mysteries, and would since be left to **contemplation** (*Anschauen*). Those who would be in the process of initiation were called **Mystai** (initiates). At our time the group of the **Mystai** degenerated and became ridiculous. In fact, that who is rational is no more forced to see secretly; everything is dug up.

their existence (*Daseyn*); and not even for a moment they hold their **living** existence in their own hands. As much as their existence was **received**, so it has to **continue** beyond them. They are altogether, generally speaking, **breathing** creatures, i.e. in need for their **preservation** of a constant flow from outside.

The gifts of life are as manifold as the ways to awaken it; manifold its conducts, and so its uses. Like the animal, man first awakes just as a sensible creature in a purely sensible nature. Like an animal, at first he just recognizes the mother. Yet, to the animal is the mother only the **breast**, not the **face**. Therefore, when it forgets the breast, it also forgets the mother. The animal has no heart and consequently he has no reason (*Vernunftlos*). Man turns away from the breast that nourishes him, looks up face to face, he **feels** love, **learns** love and attains knowledge. He could only cry, now he can laugh – look, the mother raises from her **lap** into the father's **arms** the laughing, babbling man, who can already move his hands and will soon be able to kiss!

The concealed and invisible soul turns **visible** on man's face, comes to light, communicates itself un-conceptually, and by means of this secret communication gives birth to language and the understanding of language; in the same fashion, **God** immediately expresses himself through the face of nature; he communicates himself un-conceptually to man through sensation (*Empfindung*) turned into **devotion**; and teaches the spirit, **also** reawaken **to the supersensible and uncreated**, to stammer the delightful tones of the beautiful and good, and to eventually express that word of life: his name.

Nature does not have face for those who do not see God; to them nature has no reason (*Vernunftloses*), it is an absurdity (*Unding*) with no heart and will, an obscure shapeless being creating shapes without essence, which from the absence of essence eternally builds images (*Gleichnis*) without any model but purely **out of other images**; a horrible mother-night brooding only appearance and life of shade from eternity to eternity. And when it dawns, only death and destruction, murder and lie.

Our prophet well knew all this. He said—and no doubt he was **standing**[244] because he spoke this way—«believing in a God is an instinct. It is so natural to man as it is to walk on two legs. It can be altered in few, and wholly suppressed in others, **but** it is valid **as a rule**, and it is indispensable to the innermost well-educated faculty of knowledge»[245].

Thus, faith in a God is instinct. It is so **natural** to man as to **stand upright**. It is unnatural to him not to have such a faith, as it is unnatural to him the bent-over position of those fumbling animals—with neither face nor view to the sky—that rummage the ground. He can choke this faith, but generally it is there, and where it is not present, the faculty of knowledge gets **deformed**.

I repeat: the noble man who said so, stood upright and felt that **this direction towards the sky was not a human invention! A God got man to stand upright and put in his innermost sight the stimulus** (*Reiz*) **to look up to him**[246]**!** In that moment he recognized his **better origin**, his higher vocation (*Bestimmung*), more ardently and deeply than he recognizes his existence on earth.

Yet within this faith, which is indispensable for the internal structure of the faculty of reason, what does man grasp, and how is it grounded for him what he grasps? How does the deep thinker, the wise, explain and justify this faith? How does he represent the object attested by his spirit?

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244 «Certainly, says Lichtenberg, sometimes a thought can be pleasant when one lies in bed, yet the same thought is no more pleasant when one stands». *Nachlass*, part II, 109. Moreover, part I, 33: «I noticed very clearly that I have often different opinions as I lie or stand»—See especially part I, 185—186. It is curious Lichtenberg's touching complaint (part I, 41) about the variability of his mood, so in the note at page 33: «he was almost afraid of the fact that in him everything would turn into **thought**, and **sentiment** would be lost». Then follows: «since the half of 1791 something that I cannot yet describe has stirred in all of my economy of thought. I just want to sketch it out to get back to it more carefully in the future: namely, an extraordinary mistrust in any human knowledge, except mathematics, that almost completely spreads into the literary activity. What still ties me to study Physics is the hope to discover something useful for humanity.»

245 Cf. G.C. Lichtenberg, *Nachlass*, part II, 127 - «In general (see p. 88) our heart recognizes a God, but then it is difficult (or even impossible) to make it comprehensible to reason (or understanding). It might be asked whether the sole reason (or the sole understanding) without the heart would have reached God. Only after the heart had recognized him, also the reason (or the understanding) searched for him.» At p. 101: «should it be so evident that our reason cannot know anything of the suprasensible? Shouldn't the man be able to spin his ideas of God as **functionally** as the spider its web to catch the fly? Or in other words: shouldn't exist beings (**higher**, no doubt about it) that admire us for our ideas of God as much as we admire spiders and silkworm?»

246 «Cum ceteras animantes (natura) **abjecisset** ad pastum, solum hominem erexit, ad coelique quasi cognationis, domiciliique pristini conspectum EXCITAVIT». Cicero, *De Legibus* I. c. 9.

He explains and justifies it to himself in the same way as he explains and justifies to himself faith in nature and existence, internal and external consciousness. He shows to his spirit the object of this faith and tests it in front of the spirit, like he represents and tests the spirit itself, or the spirit of a friend, or that sublime spirit of a Socrates or Pythagoras, of a Ptolemy or Cato. He does not explain or test, rather, he feels, **sees** and **knows**[247]. In man the understanding that explains and **produces** proof does have neither the **final** nor the **first** say. Even the sense that produces representations does not have them, neither the former nor the latter. Nothing inside of man has it. In general, there is not any first or last say in him; neither Alpha nor Omega. He is addressed; as soon as he is addressed, he first replies with his feelings (*Gefühlen*), with his foretelling longing for reluctance mixed with desire, horror and joy; he expresses them with noisy gesture, and eventually with sensations, thoughts and words. Only those who can interpret understand. There is always something between us and true essence: feeling, image, or word. Everywhere we see only what is hidden. Yet, we see and **perceive** it as something hidden. We label what is seen and perceived with the word, which is living sign. This is the dignity of the word. It does not reveal itself by itself, but it gives proof of the revelation, it reinforces it, and helps spread what has been reinforced.

In general, what is proper of a kind is not invention, fabrication, or what has been **fabricated** by one or more of the members of that kind. Thereby, individual men have invented and fabricated religion and language as little as they have invented and fabricated sight and hearing. Man learned language and religion, as he learned to see and hear. He would have never learned to see, if colors and contours of things had not come to his eyes independently of him; he would never have learned to see in an un-articulate and un-rhythmic nature lacking of tones, accents and

247 «To those who inquire: "Where did you see the gods, from what do you deduce that they exist, that you worship them thus?" First, our eyes can in fact see them. Then, I have certainly not seen my soul either, but I prize it. So too with the gods whose power I experience on all occasions; it is from this that I deduce that they exist, and I revere them». Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, *The Meditations*, transl. by Grube, George Maximilian Antony, (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963) XII, 28, p. 128.
«Passable clauses are present at **any** degree of knowledge; one cannot notice from them if they are hung over the unconceivable without any support but bare faith. One upholds them, without knowing where that certainty on which they depend comes from. The philosopher possesses the certainty that the common man has when he believes that water always flows downwards, because it would be impossible for it to flow upwards.» G.C. Lichtenberg, *Nachlass*, Part II. p. 80.

syllables. Nature had to be already prepared and organized for him if a connection (*Leitung*) between the two had to be formed, **if he had to relate with it**, if he had to feel, live, think, will and act, then this had to be already prepared and sorted out for him. Isolated, by himself, he is nothing: a completely impossible being. His pure consciousness is a mere empty space of thought that he himself is able neither to fill nor to **interrupt**, just by repeating himself in his nothingness by means of this interruption while producing his own echo, an '**I am'**—reverberation of **the nothing**. I repeat: there is neither faculty nor force in him through which, at any Alpha or Omega, he can **determine** by himself and bring to light even only a dream-creature in his phantasy.

You are! —the first and only!—not I, which am not able to posit anywhere a first beginning or a first end, neither in me nor out of me, even only in thought: no **first** measure, no **first** weight, no **first** number. **Another one** was responsible for creating and inventing all this **by means of an action** (*That*); it was that secret **word**, the **beginning** of all beings that was in God, and God himself was this word. This word, when **pronounced**, became creating light, creating life – this wonderful creation of God.

Plato concurred with and Job, that came before him.

Said Plato, do not name God the infinite being, since existence withstands the infinite, which is essentially deprived of essence. It is a **not yet existent**, which eternally exists only between the more and less, an existing not-being. Its image is the delusion of the shapeless, of a protoessential absurdity (*Unding*) taken as a principle, which would be All but not One—it is the No-thing (*Unding*) itself.

Call **Him**, the one who **gives** measure, in which the measure **originally** is **set—it is said**: **he himself is measure!**—he is creator by means of giving measure to every **effectiveness** (*Wirklichkeit*), every **existence**, worlds and beings. By **determining the measure**, he is the creator for each and every being of their proper force, their relations, and of that living **soul** which gives **support** and guidance. Call Him the one without the other, the **all** of wisdom and goodness, the **Creator-God**—the **Spirit!**

Before Plato, Job searched for the dwelling of understanding, the place where wisdom comes from.

«Wisdom is concealed, he said, from the eyes of any living being. God knows the way to it and its place. When God gave the wind its weight and provided the water with its distinct measure, when he decided the **direction** of rain, and the path of lighting and thunder, then he also saw and defined wisdom; he **prepared** and **invented** it».[248]

He **invented it!** He invented the law and the **finite** being; manifoldness and unity in unexplored connection; existence and nature; the **miracle** of the senses and the secret of the understanding: **man**. And along with man, according to his likeness, he created **an intuition of himself outside him**, a mortal life with a seed of immortality: the rational soul, the spirit, the **creature**. With this spirit **in** him, he created the capacity for a higher love, a will that desires his own volition, the law of justice, and a wise rule; he created piety, defeat of death, divine blessedness.

Tell us, you men of wisdom, who know by yourselves the entire truth that lies secretly before action (*That*); yet, you are unable by yourselves alone, even only in thought, to fix a point in the void and create for him a **first** place where there is no place, and there to generate with him the beginning of a line. This is not allowed because it is not possible to draw even the **smallest** line for the smallest line is an **absurdity** (*Unding*). Therefore, the line that in **thought** gets lengthened is **only** longer, but it is still an absurdity (*Unding*). **Originally**, you are unable to produce any weight because here, as well as everywhere, a first and a last, a beginning, a middle, and an end—**the very fact of unity**—are missing. A first number, a first measure, a first being and a first word are all missing. Tell us, you, that eternally dwell in a **more and less** of **nothingness**, in a pre-existing yet absolute indeterminateness, infiniteness, and universality, which alone rules and spins; tell us, you, secret creators of creation: how could man create **thought** with word, and **word** with thought? How

[248] Partially modified from Job, 28, 12-27.

did he fashion to make his **voice distinct** by means of the movement of the tongue and his breath? How did he invent to give body to thought, whereby he transmitted it and, by communicating himself, presented and preserved himself? How did he invent the way to spin air so that what is most stable lasts and survives?

You do not know! And you do not even know how breasts, mother, and father were created for the first infant, that somehow had to be born; how did a first love generate them, and how did a second love support and take care of them? Indeed! Man, before existing, has presupposed and prepared his existence as little as he has presupposed and prepared the first word pronounced by his mouth before that word existed. But he irradiated his innermost being through his eyes, portraying and painting it with colors on his forehead and cheek, as much as he let it resound with distinct voice. To every living being the gift of sensation comes with the gift of expression, the gift of expression comes, in similar beings, with the gift of empathy; the understanding. Without this gift of immediate revelation and interpretation the use of language among men would have never arisen. Immediately, from the beginning, **with** this gift the whole species invented language. Tell us, what can be truer than this: the invention of the species coincides with the invention of the word. They have the same age. Any race creates its own tongue; no one understands the other, but all speak. All speak because all, not in the same fashion though still in a similar manner, **received together with reason the gift** to distinguish and recognize the internal from the external, that which is concealed from that which is revealed, the invisible from the visible. The meaningful sound of sensation (*Empfindung*), of feeling (*Gefühl*), is, **as a sound**, not more similar to sensation and sentiment than the word to the thing, than the expression **lion** to the animal designated by this name. What has been said regarding the sound applies also to the most vivid sight of the eye, to the most telling trait of the cheek, to any expressive wink of the face, and to any expressive gesture. All this needs interpretation. But such an interpretation develops immediately, it arises through instinct; it never fails to come, it is never missing.

"Through instinct?" you ask, "Through that **blind spirit**, so **foolish and so typical of beasts**?"

I answer: Yes, through it! It is the only one who truly sees, that knows from the source; it is the spirit of **providence**, the spirit of God.

There is prophecy even in beasts: in man there is a prophecy of just a **higher** kind. The former knows, seeks, and finds what it internally desires but does not know: food not yet tasted, distant, not yet visible to him. The latter also knows, seeks, and finds something invisible, that he does not know, and that he is aware of only in his need— the need of a spirit whose **essence** (*Wesen*) consists in knowing that he does not carry his life within him, that he is from another without whom his life would disappear.

As it happens to the newborn's lips that take hold of the mother's breast, sucking from it, so it happens to man's heart that, surrounded by nature takes hold of God by worshiping him.

The rising spirit, says our Lichtenberg, drops the body to its knees.[249]

And Epictetus says: "If I were a nightingale, I would sing the song it was born to sing. If I were I a swan, I would sing the song it was born to sing. But I am a rational being, so my song must take the form of a hymn. That is my profession (*Beruf*), and I want to fulfill it." [250]

What should life mean to me, shouts Marcus Aurelius, in a world without God and providence![251]

If the nature of man, if the force and the inspiration of instinct—which is typical to him and which separates him from animals and raises him above them—consists in sensing and thinking in this fashion; if he alone as a **rational** being can sense, judge, think, and desire in this fashion, then also these sensations, impulses, and thoughts, this faith that governs and penetrates his whole being cannot become for him foolishness, without that he equally turns into foolishness and fable **also** his

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249 Nachlass, Th I, p. 47.
250 Epictetus, "Discourses," in *Discourses and Selected Writings*, ed. Robert Dobbin (London: Penguin, 2008), 42 [translation modified to meet the excerpt quoted in Jacobi's text].
251 Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, *The Meditations*, transl. by George Maximilian Antony Grube, (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963) II, 11, p. 14.

reason, his superiority over the animals, and his human nature. He is clearly deceived in his reason if he finds that he has been deceived in this faith, because that alone has placed such a lie in him, which alone deceived him and built upon this illusion its entire prestige.

Its entire prestige! For he has no other faculty to cause this deception and give him a force that oversteps all sensory or intellectual truth. As far as it is exclusively directed to the supersensible and the supernatural, its proper and unique field is that of the unconceivable effects and beings, the field of miracles. If this faculty loses all this, it would not have any place at all. To this **visionary reason**, that takes it upon itself to rule the faculty of knowledge with its high and eminent ideas, to establish itself on that very height, will now be demonstrated that it cannot obtain any knowledge, but that it can only poeticize empty delusions, lacking in understanding. They are delusions, in which the understanding is kept and prevented from truly achieving comprehension. The understanding, corrupted and captured by them, in all seriousness believes that these empty pretences can become true and bring something real. It occupies itself with them, aiming to revise them; and in the course of this revision, it loses itself more and more. So that one could truly say: the understanding **loses** the understanding and estranges senses—**solely and exclusively because of the reason!** In light of such a view and consideration, follows this clear and sound conclusion which is grounded **purely on the good sense**: reason, in so far as it is essentially **senseless** and thereby clearly unable to know the truth and—due to this lack—unable to reach truth, has to renounce once and for all its ruinous claims to the highest rank in the faculty of knowledge, and henceforth it must content itself with working under the authority of the understanding. Being the original faculty of fiction (*Dichtung*), reason has to support, under this authority and true guardianship, the conquests of the understanding by using **frames** that stretch ever broader the limits of the understanding. Nevertheless, reason should never hazard to undertake something on its own: it must always **wait** upon understanding, serve it, and obey it.

But it is impossible to carry out this reasoning because reason, when contested in this manner, takes a stand against the understanding—this vain emperor—and shows how it is in its

nudity. Reason demonstrates to the understanding—only because, says the reason, it cannot be **evinced** to it—that the understanding has only **hands**, not **eyes.** Reason demonstrates to the understanding that it can always either **nod** or **deny** with empty head what the senses for it to form a concept, namely: if something is the **same** or **not**, if the hand is **full** or **empty**. It can count by itself not even to **three** because it does not hold in itself the 'what' and the 'why' to start, restart, and stop: it holds nothing to start with and **no reason** to start, nothing to continue from and **no reason** to continue, nothing to stop to and **no reason** to stop; it does not have an **end** from which to **begin over again**. By virtue of its being (*Wesen*) it **cannot** presuppose in advance absolutely anything by itself, and as a consequence neither can it **absolutely** explain, synthetize and, thus, **compare** anything. In fact, in order to be able to **add up** by itself, it must first be able to **multiply** by itself, and in order to multiply by itself, it must first be able to subtract and divide by itself and in itself, without being taught anything of this sort. **In view of** its essential emptiness, all this is impossible. – And reason proves to it at once that, in every respect and indisputably, there is in understanding, **originally,** no knowledge whatsoever: no knowledge of the untrue as well as of the true. Generally speaking, the understanding cannot **come to** any knowledge of the **true**, and consequently of the untrue through the true. Reason proves to it that it lies **doubly**: it mints the adulterated and deceptive metal of sensibilty (*Sinnlichkeit*) with concepts through concepts, and due to this minting sells it and rates it as if it were a metal turned into pure gold. It raises itself over these treasures and by means of this continuous gathering, sundering, melting, and minting, it feeds its own expectation only to eventually give rise to something essential through this mass of inessential materials and forms.

Reason gets outraged by man's understanding that rebels against it and claims to be superior; so finally declares: «alienated from me, you are just an inverted animal; equipped with your sensibility (*Sinnlichkeit*), **without which you are nothing**, you are blind in your in your **intuitions** (*Anschauungen*), but you want to **see** in your **representations** (*Vorstellungen*) and **concepts** (*Begreiffen*). You want to distill knowledge from appearances in which nothing appears,

fundamental truths from unfounded experiences and, by gathering and assembling, unquestionable stories from invented events.»

«You call me meaningless, and therefore you consider me a faculty for delusions. In line with your critical wisdom, you recognize—confessing it loudly—that despite all this sensibility, by means of which you boast to me—**as if it alone would eventually confirm and prove everything through representation**—, that you are however utterly separated from everything true, from everything that stands by itself. You boast about it, about **such** a truth-giver, and swell with arrogance, taking pride **in** it. It seems as if you could turn what it acquires into a **true**, and your **proper**, **possession**; though you hold it in the form of worthless cents—counting these ostensible coins over and over again, **blindly** counting without **calculating** (so that will always remain an inscrutable secret for you!). Alas, you do not own in and by yourself even your **counting**! For also the latter became to you like those **cents**; it belongs to the same origin and it is with them one and same creation. Look! You can everywhere and always keep score only of **sensibility**, which for you is the begetter and the unalterable owner of the **first** and **last**, and consequently, of **all true values**. You belong to them, you are subordinate to them, and you cannot sing a different song than their own song. Their being is your cognition, their impulse your action».

«And I should bow in front of you, renounce my **worship of God**, give it up, disown it, to serve and sacrifice like a priestess at your idolatrous altar?! Even if I knew myself as a mere **phantasy**, I would consider myself too noble and sublime. Nevertheless, I am not a phantasy, I am an essence (*Wesen*) of **truth**, I am its immediate voice. Even the **clue** of it would be lost on earth if it were not for me. The one who destroys my **first** word, destroys all my words: I speak **only** of **God**. I am only a **sign** of **Him**, I am a mark that leads to **Him**: without Him I am a not-being, an absurdity (*Unding*)».

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It can be rigorously and clearly demonstrated to the one who attentively looks for the truth that, if man can only have only a fabricated **God**, then he can also only have a fabricated **nature**. The sensible objects would still have a primacy before the **supersensible** ones; but they would prove to be **doubly** unreal due to their double origin: one part from sensibility, the other part from the understanding that belongs to sensibility.[252] The senses present to us (this is generally presupposed when one philosophizes) only their own changes, but they represent nothing of **what** changed them: they present mere **sensations** (*Empfindungen*) as such. The understanding is simply the place where imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) gives shape to these sensations as if they were not mere sensations; guided by the imagination they are assembled. Then, classified in species, they split in rows to harmoniously fit out a common consciousness, **which is the non-sensible understanding**, with a common mind (*Gemüth*). Every voice of sensation flows into one another, calling and answering each other. They dissolve, echoing in a loud resonance. And with this **echo**, mind (*Gemüth*) appears. Sound comes and goes, but nothing **re-sounds**. The mind asks itself about its sound: **what** sounds, and **from where**? **In what** and **with what** does it go in resonance? It asks about the difference and the primacy between the two? – Hence, it does not know what it is asking about. But the question is inside it and lasts forever. The understanding gladly destroyed this question and, as it destroyed it, made its own echo so **independent** and **pure** that the smallest **tone**—which always **looks** as if it **wanted** to mean something—would be no longer perceived in the mind. To the understanding taken on its own are uproar and question equally repellent; like vipers in the bosom that do not die, flames of fire that do not quench.

Neither image nor resemblance! – the manifold, changeable essence of sensibility withstands the simple, unchangeable essence of the understanding. In fact, its relationship to sensibility is a relationship that destroys and abolishes sensibility's variety and manifoldness; the striving of the understanding is on the whole a mere **opposition** against everything **external to it**.

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[252] Where there is sense, there lie beginning and end, division and combination, there lie the one and the other, and the sense is the third. Understanding is necessarily where sense is: **consciousness of combination and division**. A sense that is only sense would be an absurdity, as it would be a knowledge mediated through and through.

Above all, the understanding seeks to call a halt to the trouble that sensation produces against its will. As a consequence develops that continuous process of **equating** that we call connection and which is a continuous lessening and simplification of manifoldness until—**if it were possible**—its complete removal and annihilation. Only because such complete annihilation and simplification is impossible that the understanding stays active. In **disturbed** calm the understanding just wants to regain the **undisturbed**, idle, and empty calm that it painfully misses, while it remains inactive in and for itself without pursuits or demands, desire or business. Due to the attack of sensibility the understanding is led violently **to be aware** of sensibility—I say, **violently!**; in fact, since in the understanding there are neither beginning of action nor spontaneous outcome, rather only a perpetual **going** back and **in itself**, then there is no spontaneous attention in it. Spontaneous attention belongs to vigilant and easily excited senses. Every time the understanding feels with more or less **fright** such a **tuning-out external to it**, it gets worried and works under strain to **go back to itself** as quickly as possible. Evermore it strives, wherever it strives, to shrink in its own homogeneous essence: the **pure**—unconscious—consciousness. Solely within that intention it shapes concepts. Out of that fear, in that fear, and with that fear they come into being like those instinctive inventions produced by aversion or those immediate pronouncements of antipathy raised by its **simple** nature against the manifold nature of sensibility. With the help of concepts, it gets rid of that invasive multiplicity and manifoldness in a way that only concepts can seize. Without this hostile relation and this need would concepts have in the understanding neither **ground** nor any kind of **possibility**. Ultimately, the understanding does not concern itself with the sensible in any positive way: does it give sensibility order, or does it organise or **even determine** it? The latter would mean that it **causes** the many and the manifold; it would mean that it produces them **right at the beginning.** This is a complete inanity because the manifold as such should already be determined in advance, and the understanding—on its side—searches only for not-determining, for

deconstructing individuality, essence, and actuality.[253] It works not without malice to damage all that, to wear it out artificially, to progressively destroy it. The limits of the circle of the **concept** stretch always forward, while for the manifoldness of sensibility the limits of **existence** become ever narrower. The understanding wants to sink itself completely into a **widest** concept, in the concept of a true and manifest nothing, and thus it wants to see accomplished the end of the empty essence of knowledge.

And this would be the man! Only a composition of sensory and rational delusions, of delusive **visions** and delusive **ideas**: the former, the latter, and the he himself made out of an empty and inessential (*wesenlose*) phantasy. Here an imaginary nature, there an imaginary God; and in the middle an understanding that would strenuously translate for this inessentiality—the **man**—its dream of truth **in the truth of a dream**; a necessary, eternal, and universal dream from which one cannot awakening but in a universal nothing. And the only thing that it would clearly show him is that nothing can **truly** be showed anywhere—neither through the senses which present only their own modifications; nor through reason which, being motionless, does not have much to present; nor through phantasy, the deceiver, which mocks him with images, **sensory** images of the sensible and the super sensible that do not exist; nor through the understanding itself, for it refers indefinitely from one element of sensibility to another. It posits nothing originally and annihilates experience after it has eradicated all phantasy.

If this is it: if the whole man is really this tangle of delusion and deceit without beginning or end, endowed with a sensibility that does not convey anything true and with an understanding that does not tolerate anything untrue yet does not produce anything true—but rather hangs over those completely empty waters of appearances only to brood …what? If that man wants only to emancipate himself from the delusion that he has to ground and to turn into truth, a delusion that, on the contrary, does have to be neither grounded nor turned into some truth; if that man has thus to

[253] It is said of the understanding that it **disarticulates**. But only what it is already articulated? Originally, the activity of articulating is not in its faculty and therefore neither is to divide or **multiply**. The original articulation is the secret of creation.

search for a mere nothing of knowledge and of being as his highest aim, before to realize that it is unattainable. If things are truly like that, if the unification of such a sensibility with such an understanding on the basis of a mere blank soil of an empty imagination constitutes the whole essence of man; if only by means of phantasy can he secure **existence** in and out of himself; if he can obtain from reason just **annihilation** and if depriving him of reason is to him worse than that; then man's fate is now overt and it is the most atrocious despair.

You intrepid! You sublime, rejoicing men. You reveal this fate and call victory its purpose, because it has totally clarified the secret about your own being that had long been concealed and, together with that, the one of **all** the other beings. Allow us—oh blessed ones, turned into pure light and no more in need of deceiving eyes—allow us to glance at your sky of knowledge, send us a comprehensible word that tells us how a becoming that does not become can be understood, and how a nothing eternally rising from nothing has to be thought. And explain to us how something—be it as it may: a **dream**, a **delusion!**—can all by itself come to be, as dream or delusion, from a **pure** faculty of dream, from a **nothing** of phantasy and ambition that **alone** is **true**! Question after question, request after request. If you get a first comprehensible word on how this great all that we and you call **creation** from eternity to eternity springs up and presents itself as an appearance that comes only from phantasy, an appearance in which nothing true appears, and thus, as an inessential thing of phantasy, a being that does not last, a lasting that is not. If you send to us a first **truly** comprehensible word about that, then **in return** we would owe you not only a mere comprehensible word about creation that **a God** made from nothing, but you will have a satisfactory answer to every question you ask us about this doctrine.

Without restraint we already present what follows.

Man gets only one alternative: he either derives all from **one** or derives all from **nothing**. We prefer the **one** over the nothing, and we name it **God** because this **one** (*Ein*) must necessarily be a **personal one** (*Einer*), otherwise it would be the same universal nothing but differently named; it would be that essential undetermined which determines everything; it would be the absurdity

(*Unding*) that is the Platonic infinite, and much more; a totality (*All*) but **not** a unity, a manifest absurdity, **even less** than nothing.

The **personal one** is a **one**, and this personal one was and had to be before everything and anyone else; a **one without the other**: the **perfection** of being, the **perfection** of the true.

Human knowledge rests upon **imperfection**, as its existence does. That is why according to this fashion we go from one thing to the other endlessly. Man sees and recognizes only through **resemblances**. He does not see and recognize what is **incomparable**; neither himself nor his **own spirit**. Therefore he does not see or recognize God, the very highest.

Man is incomparable. Thanks to his spirit that is **proper** to him, man is a unity for itself and not through other; by means of this spirit he is **what** he is, **this personal one and not another**. As this personal one, which **alone is a personal one** and remains the same through every possible change, he finds himself not through a confrontation with himself, as it were a conceptual essence, an essence of the **mere imagination**. In fact, what would comparison and imagination apply to? In what would the one be the same as itself? And what would it be a self that is not yet equal to itself? A self still without its own being and **permanence**; a self that is itself with its own being and permanence, with his own **being himself**, only by means of equating, differentiating, and compounding, by means of the combining together? In the end, what has carried out all this? This spirit finds itself as this being not as a result of **knowledge**, but through an **immediate sentiment of essentiality**[254] independent of memory of past conditions. This spirit knows that it is this personal

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254 The manifoldness of sensation (*Empfindung*) already presupposes connection: the connection of memory (*Gedächtniß*) and imagination (*Einbildung*). Memory and imagination presuppose but an absolute principle, an original first of consciousness and activity, a **principle** of life and knowledge, a **being in itself** that, as such, can be neither **feature** nor **effect**, it cannot be in any way something **occurring in time**, but rather it must be **Self-Being**, **Self-Cause**, something **non-temporal** and, according to this feature, also in possession of an **non-temporal** and merely **internal** consciousness. This non-temporal, merely internal consciousness, that distinguishes itself in the clearest way from the **external** and **temporal** one, is the consciousness of the **person** that **befalls** in time but does not absolutely **take shape** in time as a **mere temporal being**. **Understanding** belongs to the **temporal** essence, **reason** to the **non-temporal one**. The understanding, when **isolated**, is materialist and irrational: it denies spirit and God. Reason, when **isolated**, is idealistic and unintellectual (*unverständig*): it denies nature and turns itself into God. The integral, undivided, real and true man has **at the same time** reason and understanding: with the entirety of his self and with univocal confidence he believes in **God**, in **nature** and in the **singular spirit**. This threefold -- in general, not philosophical -- faith must be able to turn into a faith that is in the strict sense **philosophical** and confirmed by reflection. And I am audacious enough to say that I know that it can turn into it, that I see the way back on which a **speculation** (*Nach-Denken*) gone astray

one, which is the same and cannot become another one because the immediate **certainty** that the **spirit** has of itself is inseparable from the **spirit**, from its being-one-self, from the **noun-ness** (*Substantivität*).

But man's spirit, sure in itself, needs **nature** and **God** as **consonants** for its **vowel** in order to **pronounce** its existence. Or better: man's spirit is not a **pure** vowel.

Indeed, it cannot be pronounced alone, without God and nature being pronounced together with it. Namely, these **resound first**. Hence it knows that it **is not all-one** (*Alleinig*), at least with the same certitude as it knows that it **exists**. Man's spirit asserts that out of, near, and **before** itself exists another being (*Dasein*) independent from it, which is both similar and dissimilar. It asserts this with the same strength with which it asserts its own existence. Man's spirit feels and originally experiences, it also recognizes that its **autonomy** is limited like its **dependence**, that he can necessarily be a personal one **only among others**. In order to be one among others, it is impossible for it to be **first** and **unique,** for by **necessity** it must be one and **not** another. This is an independent, **real**, and **personal** being (*Wesen*).

Only God is the personal one that solely one is, the **all-one**; he is **one without the other** in the primary, highest sense; in no way is he a one **only** in relation to another being, nor is he an individual being, conditioned by **being-before** and **being-with**. He is the being absolutely sufficient to itself; **unconditionally** autonomous, he is the only **perfect** and completely **true** being.

How? Since this God is necessarily **perfect** and **sufficient in himself**, since he is not an individual being that exists only **according** to a genre and **as part of** that genre, should this God be necessarily deprived of self-consciousness, of personality, hence of reason?[255] Should he

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will return, and consequently will produce a first and true philosophy, which is a science and a wisdom that enlightens the **whole** man.

[255] (Footnote in the *Werke*) In the Friedrich Schlegel's review of the text ***On Divine Things***—in reason much appreciated, insightful and written in the most magnanimous tone (Deutsches Museum, I volume, I book, pp. 79-98; [cf. *Religionsphilosophie und speculative Theologie. Der Streit um die Göttlichen Dinge (1799-1812)*, Quellenband, hrsg. W. Jaeschke, F. Meiner, Hamburg 1993, pp. 328-339]) (p. 96 [338])—appears the following claim: «who speaks with care won't make use of the expression **reason** with reference to God; but anyone who acknowledges God as a spirit, speaks of the divine **understanding**». It is true that **more in general** we only speak of divine **understanding**, but it is wrong to say that one who carefully speaks of God will never make use of the term **reason**. When we speak of God we make use of this expression anytime we address him as a personal being, acting in freedom and providence, and

necessarily be a **non**-person, a **non**-intelligence because he is not a limited, dependent, and **imperfect** being? Precisely because he alone has life in himself and needs neither nature nor sensibility; precisely because he does not **receive** existence, knowledge, and truth in any sense, but rather he **gives** them in all places and respects; precisely for these reasons should he—and he **alone**—be the one that **is not**, the **not-living**?

Yes, the one who is not, not for himself and not in general! For a being without being-oneself (*Selbstseyn*) is absolutely and universally impossible. But a being-oneself without

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especially when we consider him under **these** characteristics. With νοῦς κόσμῶν is not meant Organizing **understanding** but Organizing **reason** (Plato, *Werke*, ed. by F. Schleiermacher, part 2, Vol. 3, p. 89). Since we ourselves possess personality, freedom, and creative power only because we are **rational** beings, how should we otherwise understand it? In man we call **reason** that by virtue of which he not only recognizes a nature **under** him—which he rules over—but he also recognizes and—especially—obeys a God **over** him. As a consequence, it can thus also be said that it is not allowed to attribute **reason** as much as **sensibility** to the highest being considering that he is not conditioned, as instead man is, by a twofold externality, which means, that he is not swinging between an "**above him"** and an "**under him"** (Cf. Part 2, p. 10). This can truly be stated **only** with a distinct association to a "**as little as**." We know that God does not see with eyes, nevertheless we speak of the all-seeing without claiming he has eyes. We know that God does not think in terms of forming concepts, as instead man does, nevertheless we speak without problem of his understanding. Why should we not be allowed to speak without problem of a divine reason also? Why, since reason is the highest element in a man created in the image of God, and since it is precisely that element which makes man the image of God? I ask: if there was not a divine **reason** but only a divine **intellect**, why would we call **divine**, unreasonably mixing the terms, what would be absent in God but so crucial and distinctive in man? And what would raise the divine understanding above the human? We know what raises the human understanding above the animal: it is the enlightenment by means of reason or, which is the same, by means of the spirit that dwells in man and comes from God and that makes him participate in God and his knowledge. Nevertheless, God cannot **just participate** in himself, like man merely participates in God through a finite and incomplete reason that comes from God. And even less (allow me this expression that comes out of necessity!) – **even less** God, which is a spirit, can exclude himself from himself and become, following his true nature, **irrational**, an infinite animal; or not even this, but a mere living whole. Many thinkers from the old, middle, and modern age have denied that God in the depth of his being has self-consciousness, as much as they have denied his personality, freedom, and providence. Fr. Schlegel unswervingly stands against those in the aforementioned text and even more in detail in the Lectures of some years later about the history of old and modern literature. Therefore, Schlegel allows us to speak, as it was conventional among those **who recognized God as spirit**, not only of a divine **understanding** but also and **primarily** of a divine **reason**. It is evident here, as elsewhere, that an unsolvable problem presents itself with the use of the words reason and understanding. It is a problem that has its roots in the fact that human reason and human understanding condition each other, so that in the reflective consciousness comes in foreground now this now that concept. As a consequence, a linguistic usage arose; an usage that in many ways the philosophical insight is opposed to, but that the philosopher has nevertheless to abide by; an usage that he can even follow, without risking of being misunderstood, only in case that he has first adequately discussed those concepts and only if he has thoroughly determined their reciprocal relation. This is not the place for a further analysis of this most relevant discourse. But let me conclude this remark with just a couple of hints about human reason and its difference from the divine one. Human reason has to be seen on the one hand as the faculty of perceiving (*Wahrnehmungsvermögen*) the divine, which is **outside** and **above** the human; on the other hand, as the faculty of perceiving something divine **inside** the man – and as being itself this divine element. If the rational being was originally not of divine nature, then it could never have reached either true knowledge or a true love of God.

"Were the eye not of the sun
How could we behold the light?
If God's eye and ours were not as one,
How could God's work enchant our sight?"

Goethe, "Introduction," in *Theory of Colours*, XXXVIII, Tübingen 1810.

consciousness and, again, a consciousness without self-consciousness, without substantiality or, at least, without a defined personality is wholly impossible: the former as well as the latter are nothing but empty words. Thus, God is not; if he is not a **spirit**, then he is the non-being in the highest sense. And he is not a spirit if he lacks the fundamental feature of spirit: self-consciousness, substantiality, and personality. If he were not a spirit, he would not be the beginning of things inasmuch as they have **actuality** and **true** being. In fact, the beginning of things is necessarily everywhere there is something **true**, which is spirit. Any true being or existence is impossible if it is not in spirit and through spirit.

The healthy and non-fictitious reason has never questioned the truth of this principle. You understand by yourselves that not-being cannot produce being, that the fundament of unreason cannot produce reason and the rational, that a foolish conjecture cannot produce wisdom and understanding, death and mortal cannot produce the living, insensitive matter cannot produce sensitive soul, love, compassion, self-sacrifice, justice; what destroys cannot produce what creates and puts in order. In general: you understand by yourselves that the lower cannot produce by itself the higher and the better, it cannot transfigure and turn into that all by itself. It can do it neither **gradually** with the **mere** empty help of a mere empty time, nor **immediately** without time passing or in no time.

But a spirit! You will be surprised – a spirit, how can it produce something outside itself, something real: more spirits? How can it produce something that is completely opposed to it: a sensible, material world? How can a **beginning** come from eternity?

Who told you that what **you** call 'a beginning' has come from it? And what do you mean when you speak about what is first and what is not first? Can you say that you see something **really** coming into being and **really** ceasing to exist in front of your eyes? Or would you **prefer** to say that it is neither a beginning nor an end, that nothing really changes, that nothing was born or dies, that everything is without alteration? **Reason** forbids the former, whereas the latter is an **irresistible feeling** that at least appears to be akin to reason. For the rest: first, bewilder **that something is and**

acts, or deny that there is anywhere something that is and lasts. Here in the heart of the inconceivable that surrounds you. Reflect and chose, if you have to concern yourself with this inconceivability in a friendly or unfriendly way.

Don't you look everywhere after a first principle? And can a first principle be conceived? And what would the first be for you if not a **cause**? And what would be a cause for you if it were **what never is**?

Hold on here and ponder more and more! The more completely, silently, and purely you concentrate in your innermost self, the more clearly you will learn that **He is!** – he is the one who made the eye: He sees! He is the one who placed the ear: He hears! He is the one who prepared the heart: He lives! He is the one who gave birth to this spirit: he wills, and knows, and **is**!

On the Divine Things and their Revelation

The reviewer is among those who cannot forget how much gratitude of every sort **Asmus**, **Messenger of Wandsbeck**, has gained for 25 years. For long he has wandered through vast Germany with his stick: he passed on what he received not only to the wealthy in big cities or the elegant in their palaces. With the same diligence and fidelity, he did the same, but even more friendly and dearly, in remote villages, in lonely abodes, giving to the poor, the sorrowful, and the oppressed. A good, upright soul! Therefore, I believe that if it a tax were levied, even small, at every big or little window that he knocked on and through which he handed something dear to its occupant, then the sum would be considerable enough to call even Mr. Pitt’s attention.

Actually, such considerations do not belong to my duty; they are true cheekiness. Hence, they make me a suspicious reviewer. Who knows about his own or his neighbor's gratitude and does

not master his mind (*Gemüth*)—as I admitted about myself—is to be considered corrupt. Fortunately, the public's explicit intention is that to allow me to appear as the reviewer of this writing despite that I have in me the said taint and that I make a display of it. In the provisional report of the sixth part and once again in the preface, the author wished to think and to make understand that we all, that represent the public according to its judgements and that set up, explain, and report its opinions to him, we all would have an heavy heart and would wait him almost as the chamberlain Albiboghoi at the audience in Jedo, Japan, who asked the permission in front of the Emperor to cut open his abdomen «so that he could be brought to different thoughts». Thus, a magnanimous audience wants to manifest the opposite intention in the most peculiar way. As a consequence, the "Unparteiische Correspondent" had to give itself to the intention of making something biased and corrupted. Down to business!

Actually, the best things are just three, said the Author in the aforementioned report. And yet he could not help it and had to try to bring them up to **six**.

We look into them and we first notice that after a scrupulous estimate it becomes clear that, considering that he spent twenty-five years to develop his Opera Omnia, our Author had never wanted to have as rule the motto "*Nulla dies sine linea*". All that considered, against our own desire we have to judge him a bit more severely.

We can and should give him credit for he remained himself and because his sixth part is not less worthy than the others. He has to thank his **serious style** for that: it does not belong to the styles of art that somebody adopts, chooses or makes by himself. Quite the opposite, it is the style that creates its art. An art that, one has to admit, is not that kind of art owned and requested by *highly esteemed people*, by great virtuosos who pass themselves off as such and have no consideration for anybody. On the contrary, it is an art that has the advantage that it neither acquires anything from the work nor runs the risk of succumbing to it. «The man,»–said our Author in the first little volume of a little treatise about music (p. 87)–«who first had music play at a divine service, did not have the intention to recommend himself to the audience as a composer, nor did the

prophet Nathan, through the novel about the poor man's only sheep, want to gain the notoriety of a good fictionist, etc…» – And he goes on: «the first poets of every nation must have been its priests; maybe, they may also have been the first to have had the idea to give more incisiveness and strength to their chants by means of stringed instruments. Music came from the altar or was introduced into the temple; we have to admit here that there was a time where music was **without any proper justification and made wonders while having the form of a slave**». – After that, in Greece where in the beginning music had only been used for worshiping Goddesses and Heroes and for the education of the youth, was for long time refined and polished, till it was turned into a fine art.

Without any justification and in form of a slave: these two features strikingly qualify the style and the art of our free master in all his works.

When something perceived (*empfundenes*) in a new and profound manner, or thought in a great and precise form, takes its shape in his imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) and wants consequently to come out in an innate shine, it is brought by him to a halt so that he can first bath its rays. He blushes, wriggles, and hides – **he does not want to have done it**. That is the reason of the peculiar kind of paraphernalia, the odd expressions, the spread out jokes, the smile on the lips of the reader, while he at the same time moves the depth of his heart. One should recall the dedication to his friend Hain and the reason behind the copper-engraving in memoriam: as those pages are read again, anyone would understand what I mean.

Good Asmus! You do not desire any of the stars – in literature as well as in politics – «**they shine on the bib**»; you do not desire them because of the other «**on the naked breast**»: that's enough for you. You can contemplate that shining star – any star that your open eye finds – in the blue sky «like that: contemplating it an entire half an hour as if it was an open or softly covered place on earth, where the soul shines brighter and you can feel delight in yourself… And Herr Professor Ahrens – who otherwise knows everything till the smallest detail—has never been able to do anything like this» – Therefore we, as your cousin, want to love you more than we love any

Magister or Professor Ahrens. And we will let nobody bother you for your smooth hair or your big shoes with thick soles, because we like you much more like this: it suits you.

With his fifth part our Author has really begun to set himself at the same level of the **honoratioribus**, and he has also plainly signed with his penname Mathias Claudius the first treatise contained in it: **On immortality**. Actually, he has silently gone together with his age (*Zeitalter*), albeit he did not have the same cadence, which would have asked him too much since he is not active or nimble enough. – Moreover, he kept at distance those who on their helmet carry the arms of Minerva with a *cuckoo* in place of the *Owl*. Yet, generally speaking, he went on with the others; as evidence, we want to quote an excerpt of the very recently published sixth part. In the fourth letter to Andres, page 183, it reads: «Man is in himself richer than sky and earth, and possesses what they cannot give… wisdom and order that he finds in the visible nature; he gives to nature more than he takes out of it. Indeed, he could not rely on them if he did not connect them to what he owns in himself, as well as one cannot measure without meter. Sky and earth are for him just the confirmation of a knowledge (*Wissen*) of which he is conscious and which gives him the audacity and courage to master and approve everything by himself. In the middle of the glory of creation, he is and feels bigger than everything around him, and longs for something else».

At this good point the reviewer would like to ask the author a question, which reads: what if we have an immediate intuition that differs from what we **read in books**, or we are **told**, or we **historically** experience? What if the dead letter can maybe do more than the living nature? What if the letter does well contain the measure of measure—which is given to it only—so that the spirit (*Geist*) can be of no use without it—or only of a little?

Many of our author's statements let us answer **positively** to this question. Now, many learned and ingenious men, even deep thinkers, have always meant that as well. But I recall no one looking **at the very same time** into that philosophical insight (*Einsicht*) as deeply as this point reveals. What is astonishing is such coexistence and combination. And was that the only instance!

But in truth, we may find in each part other statements either of the same quality or even more remarkable.

For example, in the fifth part of the aforementioned writing **On immortality**, that has been deeply and outstandingly thought and brilliantly realized, it is most diligently shown that those opinions and concepts—recognized as **superior** and whose possession determines humankind's essence and privilege—are neither communicated to us from the outside world, nor artificially produced in ourselves by our own innermost part through absorption and connection. On the contrary, we find them in us like something that we cannot resist **without seeking** or **craving** them.

Neither sought nor craved because no one can seek or crave something that they do not yet know about: «It has to be known where one wants to climb before placing a ladder».

The outer world, or nature, does not produce those superior opinions, concepts, **ideas** (which in the end will flow together into one according to our author's words), and they cannot be deducted from it either. Yet they are ineradicably borne in the innermost part of man and they prove «that in man there is not only something **Other** than what is in nature, but even that this other is **more** than nature and **above** it».

With the help of stirring examples, he displays how this **Other** gets definitely known in a twofold way: as something **higher**, as well as something **extrasensory** and **supernatural**.

Thanks to the power of this **Other**, man forces **outer** nature to change its effects in manifold ways, to accept his influences, to follow his intentions and thoughts, and to do and produce what nature, by itself, would not or could not.

Moreover, this Other and Higher finally reveals itself even more resolutely through a dominion over that nature that resides **inside man**. Here the blind powers of nature are alive and sentient (*sich fühlende*) and act merely according to the law of power; but they face the power of spirit (*Geist*) and oppose themselves to it only to begin a battle in which victory is uncertain. Nonetheless, the power of spirit with everlasting strength rises back over and over again, and claims the right of its crown and sceptre.

Unbeatable like those **ideas** rules within man the consciousness of a faculty and an impulse to rise with spirit, intention, resolution, and thought over everything **that is barely nature**. Aware of its superiority, this consciousness stands against it (against what is barely nature) and adopts it to impose on it from outside the laws of justice and wisdom, of the beautiful and good, which are foreign to it: exciting and controlling those blind powers through blind powers in order to make room for light and justice.

Within men, the sight of the being above him is inseparable from this consciousness: that being is not only the **highest** being (*Allerhöchsten*), it is God, the **All-one** (*Alleinige*). This sight points to an **Almighty** (*Allmacht*) which is not just the **omnipotence** (*Allgewalt*) of a blind soul of the world or nature—which obeys necessity (in reality, it just obeys the imaginary ghost of necessity)—but it is the **will** of a **being that wills** (*Wollende*); it is of a being that consciously and freely lets exist for **love's sake** everything that enjoys existence. Freedom without love would only be a blind chance, and reason without freedom would merely be a blind necessity that becomes aware of itself. A world exists only for the sake of the beautiful and good. It exists to **love** them.

The rational and **finite** entity's being (*Seyn*), consciousness and act, is conditional on two elements **external** to it: a nature **below** it and a God **above** it.

Only God can be in and through himself alone; he is the **absolute perfect**. Human soul distinguishes itself from nature inasmuch as it rises beyond nature by virtue of its freedom. It distinguishes itself from nature: it receives God's judgment by virtue of the consciousness of its spirit.

For all these reasons—says our author—this entire knowledge should arrive to human beings either immediately from God or immediately from the soul itself. – «For the sake of modesty (he says), I'd assume the latter»[256].

[256] Part V, 22.

This claim is crucial and grants more than we need. Besides, we wholly agree with what has so far been maintained. Clearly, eyes and sight do not come from the objects that are seen, nor appetite from food, nor the heart from the tendencies it manifests. Any sensation (*Empfinden*) and any longing (*Streben*) comes from the **being-oneself** (*Selbstseyn*), **the being in itself**, from **life** (*Leben*): every time one senses (*Vernehmen*) something, it means that it immediately and essentially senses itself, and—at the same time, quite as immediately and essentially as before, at the same indivisible instant—it senses **nature and God**, finite and infinite, eternity and time. That which senses itself is aware of **freedom** and of **God** as the highest good. That which produces morals (*Sittlichkeit*) reveals religion, and by revealing religion it produces morals. They are indivisible: this is **spirit**, and there is no truth apart from it.

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As sufficiently proved by the aforementioned excerpts, the *Complete Works* do not only admit but prove that, in order to seek God and what pleases him (*Wohlgefallen*), one must already have in his heart and spirit both God and that which pleases God. Thus, we cannot search for or investigate what is not somehow known to us. Yet, we know about God and his will because we were born from God and we are created in his image (*Bild*), we belong to his species and his race. God lives in us, and our life is **hidden** in God. Should God not be present in us in this way, i.e. **immediately** present with his image inside our innermost **self**, then what—apart from him—should bring knowledge of him? Images (*Bilde*), sounds, signs which get us to know only what is already comprehended? What makes the spirit know the spirit?

Simplicius asserts the same in his interpretation of Epictetus. There he stands against some people who deal with those human being's that turn toward God, as though God had to turn toward man since it was God who had first turned away from man: «with these people, it is the same as with those who throw a rope toward a rock on the shore, and while pulling their boat ashore they are foolish

enough to believe that it is not they who approach the shore, but rather it is the shore that is gradually coming towards them»[257].

Created in the image of God, God is **in** us and **above** us: model and portrayal; separated and yet in indivisible connection (*Verbindung*). This is the notion we have of him and it is the only one possible. As a result, God reveals himself to man as the living one, lasting for all time. A revelation through external phenomena (*Erscheinungen*)—call it as you wish—can refer at most to an **original** internal one in the same way as language relates to reason. I said "at most" and I add: a **false** God cannot exist for himself outside the human soul as much as the **true** God cannot **manifest** itself outside of it. Man represents divinity in the same fashion as he feels himself and gives himself a form; only **mightier**. For this reason, men's religion has always been shaped in the same way as they formed their virtue and their moral condition (*Zustand*). A famous commander under the government of the French king Johann had on his flag the motto: L'Ami de Dieu, et l'ennemi de tous les hommes. In his heart that meant: **For me, against all**. Only through a moral refinement will we rise to a proper concept of the higher being. There is no other way. Not every fear of God removes malignancy and vice; in order to have a value, it must be also a virtue. As long as it presupposes all other virtues, it is the noblest and the most beautiful, **like the flower of all their impulses reunited, the flower of their overall power**. We have in us a God who becomes man; it is not possible to know another one, not even through a better doctrine (*Unterricht*). In fact, how should we understand such a doctrine? Wisdom, righteousness, goodwill, and free love are not **images**, but **powers** (*Kräften*) whose representation is acquired only by exercising them, **autonomously**. Man should have already undertaken actions rising from these powers, and should have acquired those virtues and their concepts before receiving any doctrine of the **true** God. Thus, I repeat, God himself should be born in man, if man wants to have a living God instead of a mere **idol**. He [God] must be born humanly in man for otherwise man would not have any sense (*Sinn*) of

[257] *Commentar*. In *Epictecti enchiridion* p. 397. Ed. Schweighaeuser (p. 250. ed. Heusii).

him. The objection according to which in that case God would be a pure **invention** would be more than just unfair. How should it be a God that **does not** come from **invention**, how can he be **known** as the **sole true**?

«I would surrender—says our author in these pages on immortality—I would give up hope in front of the excessive power of worldly shade in our hearts, if virtuous men did not exist. But these great men taught me that the soul is immortal and invincible only if it wants to be as such, and only if it has the courage to protect its noble skin».

Perfect! Nevertheless (if we could ask the author again): how can admiration for those great men—a Confucius, a Socrates, even **Christ** himself—touch the admirer's heart, senses, and spirit? Can they exist in a different form than the representation that he made of them and that dwells inside him? Does this author's remark remain valid: «when one sees, only the eye and that who sees matter. And everybody sees not only their **own** rainbow, but also their **own** sun and moon»? How much is this comparison faulty and weak, when it is about accepting moral examples in their heart and spirit?

An example cannot impose itself as example; it cannot even offer itself as such. It has to be **accepted**. It **is** an example only in the way it is accepted. If these great men beguile us, is it not just because of what is splendid and good in them, and of what is splendid and good **in and for itself**? Since they represent the splendid and good that dwells within them, we then call them great, sublime, worthy of imitation; it is not the other way around. It is not possible that something becomes a virtue because someone imitates it. On the contrary, something is imitated only because it is **in itself** a virtue. Great men do not give me the yardstick to measure them and the good. I am the one who possesses that yardstick: it is in me like an original and independent principle whereby I know the good. If it were not the case, it would not be possible to **experience** anything about the good.

In the end, Asmus, the Messenger, together with his **cousin** and his benefactor, Herr. **Matthias Claudius**, **homme de lettres à Wandsbeck**, do not think, sense, and believe but this; and it is so only by accident—which does not lessen their heart and spirit—if they, the **Messenger** particularly, seem to have sometimes different opinions. That has been verified quite clearly by the reviewer when, while reading the sixth part of the Letters to Andres, he reread those of the fourth part. In the very first letter he found this description of **Christ**:

«He who saves from any indigence and ill-being (*Uebel*), he delivers us from evil (*Böse*); he is a helper that did good everywhere he went and **did not himself have a place to rest!** He, around whom the paralyzed walk, the leprous heal, the deaf hear, the dead resurrect, and around whom **the poor are preached the Gospel**. He whom wind and sea obey. The one **who let the children come to him, who nestled them on his heart and blessed them**… He who did not pay attention to any strain or offence but was meek until his death on the cross fulfilled his purpose. He who came to the world to give blessing, and **there he was beaten and martyred. He who left the world with a crown of thorns**».

What a portrait! What sublime and touching contrasts! What might of beauty, grace, and majesty gathered in the traits of this perfect ideal of divinity and humanity combined! The author adds: «**Andres!** Have you ever heard of something like that? And are you not dazed? For the **mere idea** one would be ready to get tortured. And if it happens that someone can laugh about or mock it, then he has to be foolish. The one who **has** a heart in the right **place** bows in the dust, exults and adores.»

The soul of this man full of sentiment opens out and becomes known in its faith. Its origin is the product of the calmest emotion. It is nothing but highest love, pure awe, sublime joy—light, spirit, and life—: the reflection of the divine itself in human bosom. His heart overflows and is shaken by one idea: is it possible that anyone can happen to mock it, to laugh? And nobly aggrieved he proclaims: if someone can do it, he has to be mad. How to laugh and mock if effective truth was not necessary, if a simple idea, if a merely **invented** representation could seize the man so that—

completely absorbed in it—he forgets everything else for it, he devotes everything to it, to the point of being tortured for it? **Invented**? All this resounds inside him. Oh, how much higher is such a representation than any human imagination! The one who can invent this way would be able to create worlds, bring spirits to existence, design life and highest beatitude by means only of the strength of his breath. Thus, the idea alone is enough to understand that here we have **more** than an idea, that we have actuality and truth in profusion. If **those** signs of truth deceive, if what is predominant in us in the form of innermost sentiment of truth lies to us about its being, then falsehood is superior to truth, falsehood is more powerful and sublime, and it is also holier and better; then the whole human soul is just a fraud. Absurd blasphemy! Who bears the heart in the right place will not imagine such things: he does not waver, does not doubt; he bows in the dust, he exults and adores.

Be cursed those who want such enthusiasm and the confidence that results from it. As for me, I do not condemn them, I respect them despite what may accidentally be mistaken for error or innocent delusion, which do not corrupt the pure fundament.

But this evidence is not enough. Despite his contradictions and the consequent mistakes and illusions that dwell in him, we feel bound to give a better account of the reason—that we have first called a **circumstance** without giving any further explanations—according to which we do not want to consider this man, that we are investigating, less than us in light of the contradictory nature of his doctrines. We do not consider this man less than us, despite the fact that we give testimony to the truth only and not, as he does, to the mistake too. This point has to be explained in order to avoid suspicion of being in a kind of contradiction with ourselves worse than the one of the Messenger, and maybe of being secretly conscious of that contradiction. The best way to that end would be to invite the Messenger to counterattack so that he could show all his talents. We want to try to do it, while we address him with philosophical sobriety, firmness, but also in the friendliest way.

«It is clear, oh upright man, that in your opinion what man can see of divinity and what, according to such a vision, can awaken him to virtue and to divine life takes the form and the name

of **Christ**. Your soul remains just, because what you honour in man is only what is divine **in itself**. And, in yourself, you do not degrade reason and morality with **idolatry**. That which Christ was in himself and outside you—if he corresponded in actuality to the concept you have of him, if he existed in this actuality—is irrelevant both to the **essential** truth of your representation and to the quality of the attitudes (*Gesinnungen*) that comes from this representation. What He is **in You**, this is what matters; in you he **really** is **a divine being**. Through him You see the divinity as far as you can. With him you hover over the highest ideas and, harmless mistake, you imagine yourself hovering only **in** him.

Since all this is evident to us, we are not that surprised that sometimes you put the essential after the inessential, the idea after its semblance, and that you make one thing leave its form and fall in a sort of **religious materialism**. In the end, you believe, as we do, that only the spirit enlivens. But, if only the spirit enlivens, then its essence—you understand it well—has to be identified with what **has life in itself**. This is the principle that distinguishes you from us. We claim that true religion cannot be given an exterior shape—meant to be the exclusive and necessary shape of it. Instead, to the essence of spirit belongs the impossibility to have such a shape. «God—states the Timaeus beautifully—**is what everywhere yields the best**»: the spirit and the power of the good. The one who is driven by this spirit walks the way to divine beatitude, regardless of the ways in which he uses imagination. No matter if those ways were maybe those which first had awakened him, lead him, and always assisted him. As for these ways, it is important that they never be deemed more than what they actually make accomplish; otherwise, they would claim supremacy, and they would oppress and chase the spirit away. Thus, it is very relevant and of wider significance what happened in the 8th and 9th centuries with the famous **dispute on images**. The most profound (*tiefsinnig*) theologians happened to deal with the question if the same devotion and respect should be bestowed both on the **divinity** of Christ and his **bodily shape**. Those theologians thought that the two are inseparably unified in the person of the man-God. As a consequence, the worship of images won and became **orthodoxy**, so that a yearly celebration with this name was established as a sign of

its enduring confirmation. Now, we want only one thing from you: you must exempt us from worshiping images inasmuch as we guarantee you that worship without hesitation. No hesitation; just the aforementioned condition that you already fulfill. Here is our hand. Give us yours.»

Contrary to our expectation, the Messenger does not reply and refuses to shake our hand. While we were speaking to him, we could read on his face that he did not want to follow us.

All in all, we have to forgive him: how could his heart not scornfully rise up against the injunction to consider the highest object of his awe and love merely as an idea he produced? In this manner, Christ owes utterly everything to him, whereas he does not owe anything to Christ. Furthermore, whether the object of his imagination exists or not in reality should obviously be of no difference to him: he does not concern himself with its **being-oneself** (*Selbstseyn*), its **actuality**. If considered beyond representation, Christ would be in any case a **nothing**. He found that the **true** lies in **idea alone**; he thought that this true, according to its nature, would just be pure fiction, something self-made through his activity alone; and it would never be something **perceived**, something that can be defined as a **true** being, or something that can have in this being its fundament. Which means: in this way, we would be in possession of a **spirit**, and everyone would have to give it to themselves. Everything else would just be a lie. This is why this story—which he loves so much—even if it were wholly true, even if it were true down to the last detail, would not have more validity or influence than a tale without any fundament or a completely invented story.

I claim that our explanation, understood in this way by the Messenger, could not and **cannot** leave him any answer; not even a word. He could not and **cannot** consider even for a moment what in him is the surest of any current experience as a possible product of the clear nothing of his imagination, for none of those experiences awaken in him such a reality. That experience is what imposes itself not only as his nude life, the common self-consciousness, the self-proving essential truth, but even more truly than this and with a more urgent sentiment. This experience generated in him a **faith** beyond any **knowledge** which, obviously, is merely knowledge without fundament (*wesenlos*). In reality, he turns away from us and takes his leave silently and bows cheerfully. And

if we attempted to hold him back, he would reply with an answer that would not necessarily be the same as but akin to that of Epictetus: «Forgive me as the lovers are forgiven. I am mad. I am out of my mind.»[258]

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It is not easy to settle the issue we wanted to solve. The reproach for **religious materialism**, for unaware worshiping images and idols, that we expressed to the Messenger, is rebutted with a reproach for **religious chimerism**, reverie, self-divinisation, and nihilism. Many reasons can sustain both reproaches; in fact, two skilful lawyers, in a purely philosophical arbitration, might go on with the pros and cons until the extinction of both claims, so that there would be no more right to find. We do not want that kind of arbitration, but we would like to reach an agreement. In order to reach such an agreement, we make all possible efforts.

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Going back to what we said, we expressly add only that we have to insist on what we have already said: sight does not come from what is seen, sensation from what is sensed, the perceiving from what is perceived, the **self** from the **other**. In the same way, we also acknowledged and stated in the most true and clear way that sight alone sees **nothing**, just as much as sensation alone sense **nothing**, perceiving perceives **nothing** and, in the end, the **self does not come to itself**. Indeed, we have to learn of our existence only from the other.

Since in our opinion the **internal** is impossible or does not exist without the **external**, then there is no **I** without **you**: it follows that we are as certain about the other as about **our own self**,

[258] *Syngnothi moi, os tois erosin ouk eimi emanton, mainomai*. Eppictetus' dissertatio, Lib. I, cap. XXII.

and we love the other as much as we love the life we share with him. The existence of any finite nature is made of being and non-being, enjoyment and need, love and nostalgia: each is made of and acts out of love and nostalgia that constitute its distinct nature.

In man a twofold genre mixes and separates itself: man knows a superior and inferior love, a superior and inferior existence. The more noble and its opposite manifest themselves assuming different forms. None of them shows the same thing: spirit—which is not infallible—prophesizes only on the basis of them. If the most noble spirit makes a mistake in its prophecy, no harmful deceit arises in him because of that: what we call 'his deception' actually represents higher visions of the true, the beautiful, and the good. The object Eloise loved in a sublime way was definitely worth her great love: it shaped her gentle soul, beautified it, gave her wings—but it was not Abelard!

The one who cannot err in this way, cannot take possession of higher truths either; these are not **acquired** through the understanding, i.e. following legal proceeding: they have to be **acquired** by reason soaring with her **prophecies** above the intellectual horizon. Yes, reason poetizes (*dichtet*)—if you want to label the seeing of the spirit alone—but she poetizes the truth! Akin to the divinity that she comes from, and while poetizing on its [of the divinity] footsteps, reason discovers what it [reason itself] is. The sentiment of the spirit that it receives and shines back becomes enthusiasm (*Begeisterung*). And with this enthusiasm reason recognizes itself completely: it finds and experiments its origin, it becomes certain of itself. Inspiration (*Eingebung*) is its **essential** knowledge; inspiration is its certitude (*Zuversicht*). Without enthusiasm it does not understand or trust its own words, it imagines noisy delusions, it takes truth for dream, and dream for truth. Lost in itself, reason warns the understanding against its [of reason] own deceit, its own insanity.

Salvation for us is the spirit that makes reason alive, wise, and certain of itself! Let us worship that spirit, because without it there would be on Earth neither worship nor beauty, neither faith nor virtue, nor stars in this night of existence, in the darkness of this life surrounded by death.

Let's go closer to our writer, to his ideal and to his uncompromising acceptance of the letter of this ideal or spirit; get closer to his **body**, to his **clothes**!

A few years ago, a remarkable man wrote to the reviewer as follows: «What Homer was for the ancient sophists, the **sacred texts** were for me. I inebriated myself at that spring, maybe till abuse: **eukairos akairos**. Also today, as I turned slow, cold, and weak, I never read without the deepest emotion chapter XXXVIII of Jeremiah, his rescue from the pit with **old ripped and raddled tatters**. My superstitious faith in these relics is actually a heartfelt thanks for the service they have provided and have still been providing to me, despite the criticism that reasons from the stage and not from the hole of the pit.»[259]

What happened to the many old and modern admirers of the Homeric poems is universally acknowledged: they read their poet in such assiduous, ever more dedicated, absorbed, captivated way, and eventually with such an awoken spirit, that they found everything in his works. Homer became for them the text of texts, it included the sum of truth and wisdom, it determined and established good and beauty with the prestige of a positive revelation. Of him it was said, as the saying goes: "**Er ist es gar**."

Now, if the merits of both Homer and the human nature—without any offense to the latter—make comprehend and excuse all this, then how much more is it not only excusable and comprehensible, but also justifiable to the highest degree, the similar veneration for the sacred texts of the **one** whom they educated since childhood in everything that is good? How much more, if they relate to his morality in the same way as language generally relates to reason, body to soul, and the visible world to the understanding?

Can some knowledge, some virtue, and some beauty come to us without form? Can they come without something that reveals them to us? Suppose the impossible: we acquired their

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concept. Could we produce and keep it, alone, without any form; a concept without intuition that represents nothing? Would it be something that could give us life and connect us to the living?

However, considerations like these are still not enough. To get closer to the subject and become more convincing, I therefore ask: who has ever had a friend of whom he can say that he loves only his **concept** and not the man under the name, and that he does not concern himself with the man with a name who, on the contrary, bothers him with his flaws? If there were a man like this, he should look at his friend's grave with as much indifference as he truly and selflessly loves him. He would keep the concept. He could even think to replace the deceased friend with a different friend, more perfect and without flaws. In addition, this last one would be immortal!

It is not like that for us, common men. In friendship we love a man with a name, exactly as he is, with his virtues and flaws; and we do not severely measure if there is **more of this and less of that**. A love according to the qualities is just a love according to the letter; it is dead. It is not a love that comes from the heart, which is living and **genuine**. The genuine, true, sincere love—grown to perfection in a noble soul—matches the **unconditioned**, necessary, and eternal love with which we love ourselves, and because of which we cannot renounce ourselves. In living being, this love represents a second life, **higher** and better than the first; and it is the love that first gives spirit to life. The one who received the divine gift of loving **outside of him** with unconditioned, necessary, and eternal love—just as life loves itself in itself—is the one who loves sublimely. He has given birth, as Plato says, to something immortal from a divine seed: he has become capable of the purest virtue, of overabundant hope, trust, and beatitude—in one word: he has become capable of **God**.

Undoubtedly, against this path of personal, individual, **positive** love or friendship—that we defend, since we do not have anything different for men «that are not pure personalities, but only **real persons**; that are not pure **faculties**, but only real **beings**»—can be found profound objections, which actually are those profound objections that the spirit can make to the body, reason to language, virtue and freedom to distinct constitutions of the state. It can be said: must the thing be spoiled in its essence because of the specific person of your personal friendship or, as it happens,

because the conditioned pollutes the unconditioned? Is not friendship necessarily tied to blind faith and trust? Does not opinion stubbornly rise above understanding, biased judgment above the one without prejudices, appearance above reason, love above justice? Did not **Caius Blossius** acknowledge before the Roman Senate that if his friend **Tiberius Gracchus** had commanded it, he would have set fire to Capitoline Hill—insisting that **Tiberius** would never have commanded such a thing?[260] Hence, does not any absolute personal friendship, like any absolute patriotism, entail the risk of all crimes?

All this might be true; yet, it would not be less settled that, in any discourse about love and friendship, only such a positive, personal and consequently exclusive, partisan—even blind and superstitious—or, in one word, **absurd** friendship or love has always been taken as the authentic and only true friendship. Further, in no time or place a man has been less respected than in the case he—devoted to friendship, the **true** one—had tried to reach perfection through this friendship, as if it was a virtue. That man was not less esteemed even in the case he had misled himself with regard to the object. We unanimously gloss over this mistake because we know that love suppresses it. Here, **in love itself**, lies the pure truth: love sees only what is good and beautiful, as much as the good and beautiful **are** seen together with the **essential** truth only with and through love. Truth without being is an absurdity (*Unding*): also mistake without being is an absurdity (*Unding*) because it has to be related to **being** (*Wesen*) in order to be a true mistake that **abolishes** what represents the content of truth. Even insanity cannot turn an object recognized as unworthy of being loved—**acknowledged as such**—into an object worthy of love. The old saying, repeated in any language and upheld by experience in all ages, reads: «among wicked people only unfairness and conspiracy are possible, friendship and love only among good people». The elements of love are pure pleasure, respect, and admiration. Love is the perception of good and beautiful, which penetrate in man with it: love is brought to him and makes ihm good and beautiful. Since **true** love

[260] Cicerone, *De Amicitia*, c. XI.

arises everywhere; since one necessarily has the intuition of the good and beautiful, and truth penetrates the soul; since love dwells in this intuition **only**, then love will not gain or lose anything of its virtue even in the case the object—that only accidentally awakens that love—can exist by itself, independently from its representation. **Beautiful** and **true** love is **inside** man, it has taken possession of him. The mistake with regard to the object is completely **outside of** him and leaves his soul unblemished. It is not the **idol** that makes the **idolater**, nor the **true** God that makes the **true worshiper**: the presence of the true God is, indeed, only **one and universal**.

Our strange Messenger says: «**Philosophy only** should **teach** whether God exists and what God is, and apart from it we cannot know anything, etc. (as a professor in the Academia—where he had been, though not studied—told him).» And he continues: «The master **said** only that. No one can truly maintain that I am a philosopher; nevertheless, I never meander through the forest without asking myself who makes the trees grow. I imagine that something invisible from far away and discreetly did it. And **I would bet that I am thinking of God, as I shudder of respect and joy** (part I, p. 20)».

Some other time, he narrates of a European who «being in America and wanting to see the waterfall of a specific river ended up making a deal with a savage to walk him there.»

«Once their trip was over and they reached the waterfall, the European goggled and started to **observe** the savage: he laid down, face on the ground, keeping this position for long. So, the companion asked him why and for whom he was acting in such a manner; and the savage answered: **for the Great Spirit**» (part IV, p. 135).

Our opinion is as follows: in the forest the Messenger really thought of God, and the savage facing the waterfall fell upon his face and had in his eyes and heart the true God. I think that even in the presence of an unrefined sacred image, a devotee can be pervaded by the highest thoughts and feelings (*Empfindungen*), the **essential** truth, and eventually leave sanctified; only under the condition that his heart rises in his chest. Obviously, only if one does not understand what the person that kneels is going through, or if one overlooks that and takes into account the image only,

it is disgusting to see someone kneeling down in front of such an image. And yet, I compare it with the philosopher, and with his bare and pure concept of God. The philosopher does not bet on his concept because he knows that it is overabundant, and he knows that it is impossible to bet philosophically on its conformity to an object. The philosopher does not fall upon his face in front of this ambiguous object that he makes exist only by means of causes, while he really and seriously does not grant it existence. He does not fall upon his face even in front of his own uncertain thought. He would be ridiculous. He does not even piously bend a knee in front of his thought: both feeling and position would hurt his dignity. The philosopher keeps calm, wholly aware of what he is dealing with. He is well upright in the presence of his God to see in front of his eyes—with the most perfect presence of mind—nothing but himself.

At this sight, how can we define what we feel? Are not these two—i.e. the idol and the man—more repugnant in the first case, the one praying, than in the second? They are both integral internal (*ganz inwendig*).

«Cousin—writes the Messenger to his friend Andres—if you meet a man that thinks high of himself, that is so full of himself, then stay away from him and have pity on him. We are not great, and our happiness lies in the possibility to believe in something greater and better… Those who do not think so and believe they are better than they are, put lies in their sack which cannot be filled with them (part IV, p. 215).»

Furthermore: «it seems that the one who knows **something right** has to… If only I once saw somebody like this, I would really like to know him. I would really like even to make a portrait of him: bright eyes, cheerful, calm, with great peaceful consciousness… such a man cannot be full of himself, even less can he despise or scold others. Oh, arrogance and pride are inauspicious passions (*Leidenschaft*): grass and flowers cannot grow in their proximity (part I, p. 21).»

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It might really be impossible to find among men someone who **knows something properly**. We hardly know what is worth knowing; we know completely and with sufficient insight (*Einsicht*) only those truths and beings which, like those of mathematics, have more being and truth in their image (*Bild*) than in the thing itself. More precisely, they are actually true **only** in image, and they really have only relations and forms of such relations as their **content**. We parlay this knowledge and acquire inestimable instruments to give our ignorance an infinite amount of new forms to change, increase, organize it, and to make of it the agreeable companion of life. By doing this, we do not pay attention to the fact that we actually are only playing a game with empty numbers: we constantly formulate new principles only to carry on formulating, without getting closer **even by the width of a hair** to a true result, to a meaning for those numbers, to something **really true**. This game with our ignorance is definitely the noblest among all games; nevertheless, after further consideration, it is only a **game** that you can **spend** some time playing, without **bringing** it to a conclusion and with no acquisition of real and true existence (*Dasein*). These are the rules of its manifold usage: organized and brought to a system, they constitute our sciences. With these rules we are incapable of doing anything against our radical ignorance; moreover, they divert our attention from this. Thus, the knowledge that science gives **according to its nature** is **perfect** in the **proper sense** of the word. We own it in the real sense; we keep it totally under control, for sharing or for our use only. If applicable, we use it with the greatest trustworthiness. Thanks to it, we become masters of ever higher rank not only **in** our own game, but also in the playing itself.

It happens just the reverse to those who only strive for that knowledge, which is—according to the **Kantian** words—«**knowledge merely foreseen and fervently desired by reason**.» This knowledge does not have as its object what **whiles away** the time, rather what **brings it to a halt** and **dissolves** it; its object's **intention**, **fulfillment,** and **explanation**, the purpose of nature and man's ultimate goal, the sense of God and the being of truth. We possess and have under our control, for any real application, all this only inasmuch as the spirit of each one is in itself able to bring about the living. These subject matters cannot be distinguished from the actual power of the

spirit, they cannot be **produced from outside** and they cannot be fixed from outside, neither for us nor for others. All the means for this goal are like the knot in a handkerchief: one sees and remembers the knot too, but they cannot tell what they should remember. Those things must be grasped and constantly held alive. Being able of this, this is the most noble and highest power of the soul (*Seele*). This power is not to be found in some Solomon's ring of old or new philosophy that one can purchase and put on, in any talisman of some so-called religion that one puts on while performing prescribed rites. This power must be created by man, within himself and from himself. «Any ceremony» said Friedrich Richter, «goes insane with age, as dogs do». Our systems of spiritual knowledge—philosophical and religious—bound to the letter are **far away** from the truth of life; what are they, if not the sediment and the *caput mortuum* of reason or, at most, **formalities** and **ceremonies** of its manifestation? They emulate with **legalistic fidelity** without the spirit of that commitment. They receive and get it out of themselves a new spirit which may often drive insane, more than any dog.

Should we analyze all this matter adequately, we would not get worked up, as it happens, over the incidental variety of the ways of representation and fashion, and of the figurative, symbolic, or abstract performance. We would not grant to a form of opinion an advantage over other forms, as if truth and reason dwelled exclusively in it while the others hold nothing but irrationality and lies. One should think that at least we, **Philosophers**, should not make that mistake, since we wholly know and always remember that opinion does not have to judge reason and truth, rather opinion must be judged by them. Exactly at that moment does reason prove its power, when it rises free with its judgments above each particular point of view, bearing an insight that dismisses and obliterates the illusion caused by a limited individuality. Unfortunately, the prerogative of infallibility and independence from the prejudice of the sensible (*sinnliche*) imagination is limited by many clauses in its application; so the philosopher—who scrupulously respects these boundaries

to judge unerringly—can speak about **almost** everything, but not much and not for long.[261] In the case he does not respect those boundaries, what will happen to him is what we see everyday: every time he will take his misleading belief (*Überzeugung*) for the inspiration that comes from an unmistakable being. And those opposed to him will personally be taken as rivals of **reason in person**, therefore, of **truth itself**. Clearly, exception springs up when one holds only an **opinion** and when this belief does not assert to be more than that, as though it was certainty. Where this exception does not appear, the aforementioned confusion between unerring reason and misleading reason occurs of necessity. In this situation, should we refer to reason, we would understand under this name something that must automatically feed our beliefs to anybody. That would happen for certain, if every human being had enough reason or if every human being used properly what they own. According to the nature of the issue—and with more or less zeal, displeasure, and indignation—we assume responsibility of that reason and that truth that have been challenged, hurt, persecuted, and endengered by suppression. Moreover, since it is indisputable that reason and truth concern the philosopher mainly and most closely, given that he «is **ideally the very legislator of reason and consequently of truth**»,[262] then he must clearly feel the insults directed at them even more vividly, as much as he diligently must protect and defend them, and make them more universal and authoritative than other human categories. Hardly does an indignation arise—perhaps

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[261] In Plato's *Philebus* we deal with two different kinds of knowledge: «one kind deals with a subject matter that comes to be and perishes, the other is concerned with what is free of that, the eternal and self-same» (61 d-e). There is not question that the latter, with regard to the true, has to be taken as truer than the first. Speaking of which Socrates asks whether has enough knowledge the one who «knows the definition of the circle and of the divine sphere itself but cannot recognize the human sphere and these our circles, using even in housebuilding those other yardsticks and those circles»
Protarchus: «We would find ourselves in a rather ridiculous position if we were confined entirely to those divine kinds of knowledge, Socrates!»
Socrates: «What are you saying? Ought we at the same time to include the **inexact** and the **impure** science of the false yardstick and circle, and add it to the mixture?»
Protarchus: «Yes, necessarily so, if any one of us ever wants to find his own way home»
Socrates: «But how about music: Ought we also to mix in the kind of which we said a little earlier that it is full of lucky hits and imitation but lacks purity?»
Protarchus: «It seems necessary to me, if in fact our life is supposed to be at least some sort of *life*»
Socrates: «Do you want me, then, to yield like a doorkeeper to the pushing and shoving of a crowd and to throw open the doors and let the flood of all sorts of knowledge in, the inferior kind mingling with the pure?»
Protarchus: «I for my part can't see what damage you would do to accept all the other kinds of knowledge,» (N.B.!) «**as long as we have those of the highest kind**». Plato, *Philebus*, ed. Dorothea Frede (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), 62 a-d.
[262] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 867, quotation is not correct. Bold of Jacobi.

the only exception would be the theological one, related to the latter—that is able to exceed **pure** philosophical wrath.[263]

The one who writes this is not only a **free thinker** but a professional philosopher who neither has ever been engaged in nor has understood anything else: by now, advanced in years, he can be truly proud of his career and take as much advantage as possible of his profession. Nevertheless, the latter considerations, that during a fairly long time he happened to take the chance to refine and develop, drove him more and more **gladly** to a fair way of thinking whose basis is the belief that we all, without exception, necessarily in the **same way**, even though, **incidentally**, not to the same **degree**, are subjected to the irresistible violence (*Gewalt*) of misleading opinions. He claimed that we would have to cease to be human in order to elude this power; however, this would not make us **more** than human, but it would rather make us **nothing.**[264]

The undersigned author forces himself to move away from his favorite topic in order to connect a **second** statement to the first: he is not **tolerant** at all and he does not want to be seen as such, despite his fair way of thinking.

In his opinion, it is only vain boasting and hypocritical foolishness to promise to be tolerant of every opinion except for those that would **lead to intolerance**. This would imply that either he is completely indifferent to any truth—and finds completely unbearable both the idea of the high value of truth and the hypothesis of the priority of one opinion over the other—or he speaks utter nonsense. What does not **withstand**, that does not **stand**: each withstanding is at the same time an assault. That which stands withstanding, it excludes. Every life, every personal existence (*Dasein*), every property is exclusive and, for the sake of all of this, one has the right and the duty to fight

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263 «Senses do not mistake, nor the immediate knowledge of reason; only the arbitrary reflection that observes again, while it wrongfully assumes that, what does not appear as perceived in the object, it is not even present in the object. Neither intuition, that lies on the ground of **demonstration**, nor the immediate knowledge of reason, that lies on the ground of **deduction**, can be wrong; only mediated judgments of the understanding can be wrong. Different kinds of belief having the same validity survive in the realm of the immediate knowledge of our reason: cognition, faith, and premonition. The whole debate about truth and validity of knowledge does not touch at all the intimate being of reason: within reason there is nothing but the pure truth, in one or the other form, the form of the finite or of the eternal, the form of what always persists in nature or the form of what always changes in beauty». J.F. *Neue Kritik der Vernunft*, vol. I, 339.

264 See Plato, abovementioned passages of *Philebus*.

against the aggressor because, by nature, he can be dominated only through exclusion and **war**. We rightly maintain an inmost belief more enthusiastically and emphatically than we do for our blood and property **[Lied Franz der Keiser, 1797]**: we cannot give up on it without giving up on our reason and personal existence (*Dasein*). Indeed, we all call reason that which makes us certain in ourselves, **which in ourselves says yes and no with the highest power**. Without certainty, there is no reason; without reason, there is no certainty. The one who, acknowledging that, grants himself and his fellow human beings **the right to be intolerant**, is **really** tolerant. Nobody should be intolerant in a different manner. In fact, to be indifferent towards every opinion implies the dreadful degeneration of human nature: this indifference can arise only from a general lack of faith. Only out of the steadiest trust (*Zuversicht*) noble endeavours flourish, and heart and spirit rise. Nothing shall look important and venerable to those who have lost it: their soul has lost the noble strength, the power of **seriousness**. What a trivial ghost; I shudder … Watch!: it goes around and **laughs** – **and laughs**!

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We should ask how to combine steady trust with **that fair way of thinking** which has to be based on the belief that there is no rule in the knowledge of truth that never fails when applied. How to combine steady trust with the belief that the most erroneous principle might look as certain as the most true? According to a clear insight, when in our understanding takes shape an indissoluble relationship between an inconsistent principle and another one that we know with certainty, then reason itself forces us **either** to give up on the certain principle deeming it untrue, or, because of that, to consider no longer the first inconsistent and, as a matter of fact, to deem **thinkable** the **impossible**. Such an insight, which justifies too much, makes it easy to understand what was

already in Marcus Tullius' time **common knowledge**, namely: nothing will be too absurd to become the honest doctrine of a philosopher.[265]

However, that association would be impossible, if there were not any original, simple, **immediately** certain, and absolutely **positive** truths which prevail in our mind as the highest truths with no need of any proof or **evidence** coming from a different knowledge. The confidence that ennobles the heart and spirit sets itself up only on these truths; such a confidence could not be what it is if its light were only a reflection and its power were only derivative.

We come across such an immediate and **positive** truth both in and with our feeling of a drive (*Trieb*) which rises over every sensible, changeable, and accidental interest, and which irresistibly reveales itself as the **basic drive** of human nature.

The objects of knowledge and will that this drive strives for are from time immemorial what men **generally** call '**Divine Things**.' Their effects that show up first are called **virtuous** feelings, inclinations, mindsets, and actions. For this reason, that feeling is also sometimes called **moral feeling**, other times **feeling of truth**. The true itself, the good itself, and the beautiful itself equally reveal themselves within it without intuition (*Anschauung*) or concept (*Begriff*).

The beautiful is known by the pure feeling of undefined admiration and love that it inspires: **the beautiful is immediately recognized only for its beauty**. Similarly, the good is known as good by the pure sentiment of respect, high regard, and awe. Nevertheless, both the good and the beautiful presuppose the true, on which any reason is grounded. The faculty (*Vermögen*) of presupposing the true—together with the good and the beautiful that come with it and in it—is called reason.

For the human being (*Menschen*) this truth is superior to any truth, it is a knowledge in his deepest consciousness: **human being has the vocation (*Bestimmung*) and the strength (*Kraft*) to rise with its spirit over the animal element that is mixed with his being**.

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[265] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Divinatione*, Lib. II, cap. 58.

Man rises over the animal element through wisdom (*Weisheit*), goodness (*Güte*), and willpower (*Willenskraft*). All other virtues develop from those **primary** and **fundamental virtues**: justice (*Gerechtigkeit*), moderation (*Mäßigkeit*), resolution (*Standhaftigkeit*), self-control (*Selbstbeherrschung*), loyalty (*Treue*), truthfulness (*Wahrhaftigkeit*), charity (*Wohlthätigkeit*), magnanimity (*Großmuth*); every noble and loving attitude is like a twig from the main branch.

These features, whose combination determines **virtuous nature**, are worthy for their own sake and not because they are means for other aims from which one has to infer their needs and accept their prescriptions. They actually do not emerge from any need, but from a **source** (*Ursprung*) which is independent of the **concept of duty** (*Pflicht*) as much as of the desire for **happiness**. They are independent of the concept of duty because this concept takes as a basis the feeling of what is **worthy of unconditioned respect**, or because it definitely does not belong to the sphere of what is **properly** moral.

They are independent of the desire of happiness because—as Plato claimed and Cicero repeated—**goddesses are not well known as good because they are blessed, but rather they are blessed because they are good**. The effort to consider virtue just more **useful** than happiness is even more inconsistent. Virtue cannot measure its value on the basis of another good to which it is related as if it was the means for the goal—nor in relation to an intention **distinct from itself**, nor in relation to a **divine reward**. Indeed: why should God reward virtue if it **was not in itself** good and worthy of desire, if it was not **rewarding**? **God** himself should find satisfaction in it precisely because he rewards it! In turn, we should find **him** worthy of worship only because he could connect reward and punishment with **arbitrary** commandment and, by doing this, he could **determine** good and evil, and **create** them from nowhere.

Epictetus thought differently. The most charitable effect of virtue, he claimed, is the communication of itself: you cannot earn more through a good deed towards your neighbour, than when you educate his soul on moderation, justice, resolution, and goodness.

Speaking of virtue, we should not say it is the **highest good**, because that expression seems to refer to a previous comparison that does not take place here. We can compare only when two things are **different**, and comparison is possible only because a third makes them **similar**. Therefore, virtue and that sum (*Inbegriff*) of goodness, which we usually call **happiness**, are either one and the same—which is the case when the former refers to the latter as the cause refers to the consequence conceptually—or opposed. They are clearly opposed if one conceives happiness as that ideal of imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) that includes the fulfilment of every task (*Zweck*) that sensibility assigns. Thus, the vocation of virtue is not to **be at the service** of inclinations, desires, and passions—i.e. of sensibility in general—but rather to **rule** over them and to **put them at its service**. If virtue had as its vocation nothing but providing human being with the highest degree of good living and comfort in enjoyment—even till the end of time—while moderating his desires and having them stimulate and satisfy it harmoniously, in that case, we could not define this virtue as **holy** and **sublime**.

Happiness, as we have defined it here, has in common with virtuous nature **only** that **both** are the sum (*Inbegriff*) or perfection (*Vollkommenheit*) of something attractive **in itself**, therefore both are desired **for their own sake**. As it happens in the case of **simple** existence, this is a property that does not allow for any more or less and, as a consequence, any determination through difference.[266] Assuming that its property or characteristic **is desirable in and for itself**, virtue can be neither recognized nor compared. No **third term** is given: there is thus no term through which virtue and its opposite, happiness, might be compared; there is not third term that we might use to

[266] Here an important remark: every immediate object of a natural instinct, like life—which in the rational and the non rational beings has the prerogative either to posit itself as **an end in itself** (*Selbstzweck*), or **to be for it self**—shall be desired for its own sake and not for its effects (could we say **unselfishly**, **categorically**?). The representation of the appetite cannot originally precede the desire, the craving, as much as it cannot **found** the instinct, since appetite springs from the relation between object and instinct. Therefore, representation can **produce** desire just as little as reward produces virtue. The mind's movement (*Gemüthsbewegung*), provoked by that drive and that we call desire, is merely the movement to arrive at and unite with the object. Its use is universal. At first, we desire and want an object not because it is pleasant and good, but rather we name it pleasant and good because we desire and want it; and we desire and want it, because our sensible or supersensible nature holds it within itself. It is not a matter of knowing what is worthy of desire and what is good beyond the faculty of desiring, beyond desire and will themselves. **In the innermost part of us**, we recognize and **call** pleasant, good, and beautiful those objects we desire, want, and love. *L'intelligence du bien est dans le coeur*, said Pascal with profound and sublime words.

determine their relative value, to measure or to assess them by comparing them. Virtue's **highest and incomparable** value can be acknowledged only **deliberately**, namely: I will find in my consciousness that above all I want either **virtue** or happiness—mere **pleasant existence**.

In the case I want happiness more than anything else, my concept of it will determine what is **good** and what **deserves respect**, so the worst crime may turn into duty. As a consequence, virtue is just what makes me steady, able, and fit to a possibly uninterrupted good living; there is not a different virtue.

On the other hand, in the case that I do not want happiness at all costs, nor deem it of the highest value, it means that I do want **virtue** above everything else—i.e., absolutely. With that virtue, I become aware of a higher drive which represents the source of virtue. Through this drive I become conscious of a higher object compared to which the other object, the ideal of imagination (*Ideal der Einbildungskraft*) called happiness, disappears like a shadowgraph. I feel this drive as my essential, true and highest strength (*Kraft*), and on account of this feeling I necessarily ascribe to myself the faculty to determine all my sensory desires, inclinations, and passions in accordance with virtue's needs. This faculty has always been called **moral freedom**, and it does not consist in the unfortunate ability to will opposed things—like good and evil—because, if this unfortunate ability dwelled in us, we would **not be free**. We can ascribe freedom to ourselves, in so far as we are aware that there is strength in us designed towards the good, able to engage any opposition (*Widerstand*). It is an impenetrable mystery why this strength, which is nothing but human being's spirit—the power in it, by means of which it **has his own life in itself**—does not overcome that opposition. Thus, it is an impenetrable mystery why this strength does not really **make** us free, but it just makes us approximate to and strive for freedom. This is the mystery of creation, the mystery of the union of finite and infinite, and the mystery of the existence of an individual and personal being. That is why it reigns over nature, which announces and hides a God in our breast as well as everywhere else. It hides it so well—according to the words of an inspired poet—as to «turn us into animals and, in conscience, to deny God which, in the visible world, is shrunk to nothing; yet still,

conscience announces it so penetratingly that no one can be saved from its **ardent activity**, pervading everything in everything.»[267]

Only the highest essence **in** the human being bears witness to a **Highest** (*Allerhöchsten*) **outside** of it; only the **spirit** in it bears witness to a **God**. Hence, his faith sinks or rises according to his spirit's sinking or rising. Necessarily, insofar as we find and feel ourselves in our consciousness, we determine our origin and present it to others and to ourselves. Thus, either we recognize ourselves as born in the spirit, or we assume that we are living beings coming from what is lifeless, a light from the darkness, an absurdity cropped up from the stupid night of necessity and chance. We imagine, vainly stretching our wittiness, that life comes from death, that the latter gradually became aware of the former, like un-reason of reason, nonsense of intention, and mayhem of the world. Around the **core** of All, of this **perfect absurdity**, just teguments and shells take shape; they are for sure just like mildew or pustules on the shell. And we, fool, call them: order, beauty, harmony; or, when inside the human being, we call them spirit: desire of true and good, freedom, and virtue.

Thus, the fool says in his heart: there is no God! On the contrary, the wise one (*dem Verständigen*) feels God as present as its own soul. It is present in its spirit, which is what determines and gets all (*Alles*) started: the **first** and the **last**. Present in the heart in the form of what wills and produces with its omnipotence the best in every place: the author and the power of the good.

«Try—says the abovementioned author—to read the Iliad after removing with the power of abstraction the vowels Alpha and Omega, and then tell me your opinion about the poet's **intelligence** and **melodiousness**!»

[267] Johann Georg Hamann, *Kreuzzüge des philosophen*, 1762, p. 184.

This is exactly what happens with regard to nature: it gives only the silent letters. The sacred vowels—without which nature's writings cannot be read and cannot pronounce the word which creates the world from its chaos—**are inside the human being**.

Finally, I come back to you, **my friend Asmus**; this counts for any external revelation of God without distinction. And this comes both in your favor and against you.

It comes **against** you every time you raise silent letters over the vowels, as though it were the former that produce the latter—that is impossible, even with the aid of a miracle.

It comes **in your favor** every time you have an adversary who does the same, but the other way: with **his** silent letter he wages war on **yours**. But yours has more breath.

You might retort: only by way of vowels one would ultimately not attain much since with vowels alone would appear neither an intelligible word nor a human language. Bearing this in mind, no unworthy grammarians named the consonant **main sounds** and the vowels **auxiliary sounds**. Therefore, many eastern peoples, especially the Hebrews, considered the vowels to be such inessential parts of words as to have adopted for them only a couple of ambiguous symbols and, finally, to put in writing the consonants only. Consequently, the priority should be given to you, **as you know better what is right**, even more with regard to **those** who boast of succeeding with vowels only, and those who get the consonants to count just for being present in practice.

I willingly grant you this desired priority; I would incidentally merely blame you for the hasty substitution of the **spoken** word with the **written** word. **In the spoken language**, could the Hebrews really dismiss the vowels and get by with a couple of ambiguous sounds in their place? It is not worth blaming you about it since consonants as much as vowels are indispensable in audible **speech**. Articulate sounds, the syllable, and the word come into being only by virtue of consonants. From the perspective of a well formed speech, of an already determined language, the grammarian can thus with reason name the consonants the main sounds and the vowels the auxiliary sounds.

Nevertheless, your remark is welcome because, on my part, I should have you look at the fact that the **main-consonants** and the **main-vowels** are the same in every human language,

because at their roots there is one and the **same alphabet**. The great diversity of languages comes into being starting from different combinations of consonants and vowels within the words, and words—taken as parts of the speech—within the frame of the speech. Inasmuch as they are all ascribable to a universal grammar, they are intended to serve reason equally as instruments so that no one is necessarily more reasonable, clever and moral only on the basis that they have French, or English, or Italian, or German as their mother tongue. Rough or ill-educated people speak rough and ill-educated languages. But it is not the language that originally gives people their education, it is instead always the culture that informs the language—improving or worsening it, as many examples show. The same happens with habits, customs, laws, morals, and **religion**. Everywhere is the spirit, **living**, which creates, shapes and improves everything.

Now, if you, after considering my position, once again exhort me **as** a **philosopher**, like you did in the fourth part: «**Try to ride, as a courier does, a drawn horse; however perfect it may be**», then, I will not hesitate to show you that your threat is in my favor more than it is against me. And I will reply: and what if it would be better with a **stuffed** horse? At first sight one can believe that the stuffed horse is more tangible, that it can be straddled and ridden. Yet, the portrayed horse—if it had been sketched and executed by Raphael—is closer to the real horse; there is a life in it that the other misses. I abstain to continue the comparison.

No one should believe that I am accusing the Messenger of riding a stuffed horse. Clearly he is riding a living horse, which has wings and will bring him outstandingly far. That is the reason why I often envy him and the others who share the same privilege: I wish I could have made an alike effort; and I would have done had only my winged steed stopped in order to be straddled. But it has never stopped for so long, hence I do not know anything about this state. It should be very confortable to be carried uphill and downhill, over swamp and bog, with no strike or worry. Besides, I cannot imagine how a man should gain **merit** and become better **in himself**. I believe that **this** advantage should be found on the other side, and it should turn out to be useful for their trouble to those who, abandoned to the impetus of their inclinations (*Schwungkraft*), firmly proceed

to their destination. The impetus of their inclinations is still needed to straddle a winged steed and to **hang on**; otherwise one **would not be riding**. Only children and fools claim to **ride a horse** while they **straddle** a stuffed horse or they run around with a stick between their legs. It is even less plausible that a dead weight can ride, because it is just loaded up on the horse. After an honest and severe consideration, what counts is just the impetus of one's inclination (*Schwungkraft*) and attitude (*Haltung*) towards wisdom, bravery and good mind (*gutter Lust*). At the end it is irrelevant whether or not one rides a winged steed, or gets along without any. The horse determines the man less than the cover the book.

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I can assure the **careless** reader: the fact that after all of the changes, parables and figures I always go back to the same point, where I stop and struggle only to end up repeating it. This does not happen due to thoughtlessness and negligence but due to the utmost prudence and greatest diligence. I see two parties: the supporters and the adversaries of the positive—or **realists** and **idealists**—who are what they are in the broadest extent of the notion and, at the same time, in the more exclusive manner. In either case I see both much right and much wrong, and my hope for a possible agreement between the two lies in that. I mean, if I come to emphasize what is wrong in one as well as in the other and gradually move one another closer so that it will not be possible to see one without seeing the other, then we will eventually find the conditions for a good agreement.

Among the adversaries of the positive or the **real-objective** a group excels in particular: I will name them philosophers in the **outermost** sense, although not in the broadest sense of the word. They have brought their love for truth as far as to ask no more about the true. They are convinced and they can demonstrate that the **true does not exist** in the most specific and literal sense of the notion. Now, they teach that this knowledge, this sole truth, is the pure core of every knowledge (*Erkenntniss*) and cognition (*Wissen*). The one who has set it free in its purity and

thoroughly enjoyed it, finds himself turned (*verwandelt*) to the science itself that does not need any true out of itself: namely, they turn themselves towards the truth that the absolute **IS**—which is in no way **something**. They are therefore safe against all deceptions, self-deceptions and phantasies; they pass over the **illusion of the true**, only to go to the essential and pure **truth of the illusion**. They do not see under the light anymore, but once themselves transformed into light they do not even see the light.

Now, such a wisdom, which intends to deliver men from the evil of **err** and reconcile with themselves for all time, actually nails them on the cross of the most desperate **ignorance** and definitely persecutes every **natural** life—of faith, love and hope—so that with a transfigured body of **mere logical enthusiasm**, that is at the same time their soul, they rise back from the ashes, undaunted. That wisdom raises over the lifeless feeling only a repulsive ghost which cannot do anything but beckon with its empty skull as if to say: **nothing and nothing again**. Such a wisdom wants to be **all in all** and pass its skeleton off as the father of the spirits, as the creator of all things. It wants to pass its Dii Monogrammi[268] off as the heavenly powers which led us with powerful hand out of the slavery of Egypt and away from the blind paganism of all the former doctrines in order to introduce us into the integrity and brightness of its doctrine in a promised land where only the knowledge of knowledge flows, with no milk, honey, or any such similar impurities. We should take possession of that land without running the risk of the Hebrews' destiny, whose credulity became proverbial: due to both their superstition and their effusively absurd stories, they became a laughing stock regardless of their horror of superstition. The one who has been attesting that cannot let this wisdom count for true wisdom: he has to set up his doctrine clearly and plainly against the other.

That one should also present a counter doctrine.

[268] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, L. II, c. 23. «Epicurus monogrammos deos et nihil agentes commentus est»

As we already said, the aforementioned class of **Interiorists** (*Inwendigen*), **in whom nothing external can penetrate,** and the class of **real Externalists** (*Auswendigen*), who claim that they hold nothing but what comes from outside, are facing each other. They trust their senses only, i.e. they deny both reason and conscience's utmost authority as **the highest**. Neither their demands nor their **inner** word will decide what is true and what good, but only a word coming from outside. They claim that men would have known nothing at all about God if he had not announced them his existence (*Daseyn*) by means of extraordinary emissaries. These emissaries have taught men about the divine qualities and schooled them that the highest essence is wise, just, good, and truthful. The divine **omnipotence** is immediately presented by means of miracles that they carry out acting like extraordinary emissaries.[269] For the externalists, this bodily evidence (*Beweis*) offered through miracles counts with regard to every doctrine proclaimed by the emissaries of God: not merely as the highest, but as the **only valid** evidence. They admit to prove only the effectiveness (*Wirklichkeit*) of miracles, i.e. **the truth of the mission**. Once it is confirmed, reason (*Vernunft*) and conscience (*Gewissen*) do not have to investigate the content of the doctrine anymore. **Power** has decided, hence blind submission is obligatory. Say, if the right to valid counterargument was granted to reason and conscience, the whole system would therefore shake down to the ground.

That is what the consistent partisans of an absolutely positive doctrine of religion have long since thought to have to assert. They find that the heresy would have no end if reason and conscience could reply or even have the last word; faith's unity and solidity would never have come into being. They asked and still ask whether it is worth holding the true faith, i.e. being enlightened by God through his emissaries. They say: «By all means, you do not want to claim the opposite. Consequently, you admit that there is no bigger crime than to prevent every man from being blessed through the true faith: as a result, the path of this inquiry would not lead to the universal acceptance

[269] It is remarkable that F. Socini, who had such a right idea of moral nature of man, had the same theory. Indeed, he stated that the external revelation is the source of religion and, aside from that, man would not have reached the knowledge of God. See F. Socini proelection. Theol., chapter II, 3. See the answer 40 in the Rakau's Catechism and the lesson of Osterod on the highest truths of religion, chapter I, 9 and ff. [Marginal note of Martini].

of true faith, as much as to the predestination to a necessary order of salvation conditioned by that very faith. Such hope would be nonsense. What is left is only the path of authority: the coercion of faith by means of existing or adequately testified miracles. The one who resists this authority, imagining, claiming, and teaching that inside man there is a higher authority—which is the human conscience and reason—believes and trusts in himself more than in God, and is damned».

Finally, I wanted to oppose and sharply and clearly set myself against the most extreme positions of both parties because in this essay I have hitherto given them a very moderate appearance, and I made them incline and shake hither and thither, or I even mixed them.

Now I have to explain more clearly than ever, how I approach the positions, and which one I tend towards: to the internalists' party, or to the externalists' one; or, how I regard both parties from my own belief. Now I am going to express my position no more acting like a reviewer, but the first person.

I am still convinced of what I explained more than twenty-five years ago in my book on the doctrine of Spinoza, and in the dialogue on Idealism and Realism edited right after. We agreed on the intention of philosophy and its ultimate goal though we disagreed on the best and fastest way to reach that goal.

This is no more the case, nonetheless, nowadays rather, we guarantee and believe almost unanimously that in order to reach the garland of truth, science, and wisdom, we need to follow a direction that is opposite to the former.

How fast the systems of philosophy have changed in the last twenty five years in Germany is well known. Many thinkers have changed their body more than once; as for me, I let my soul go off wandering always reserving the right to bring it back at the starting point after the fulfillment of any effort. By the way, I carried out everything I had in me, so that the transmigrations (*Verwandlungen*) were each time completely fulfilled, as much as it was possible within the

boundaries of those terms. Hence, I was then able to report, having returned more learned than Pythagoras, on what I experienced during my transmigrations.

We should remember that Kant proved in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, at the same time as I did, but with different aims and tools, the vanity of every speculative claim to demonstrate extrasensory truth, i.e. to found it objectively and to assume that by means of a logical mechanism as if it were a mathematical truth. Regardless of this point we should remember that he retains this general conviction expressed in the most precise way/manner at the beginning of the *Critique*: philosophy has only three extrasensory objects, indeed, three ideas: *freedom*, *immortality* and *God*. (He taught and taught again in all his works that) Everything that philosophy deals with serves only as a tool to get to these ideas, and to preserve their reality.

Out of this claim follows that if philosophy loses its general goal, then it loses itself at the same time and we have to give up, together with its intention, (*Absicht*) also its essence (*Wesen*) and concern (*Geschäft*). With philosophy, reason in general along with humanity would also have to be dropped (at least in Kant's opinion). He clearly claims that the knowledge of God and religion are the highest goals of both reason and human existence. What is to notice in particular and what is quite right to remember firmly is that the words **God**, **freedom**, **immortality**, and **religion** had for our philosopher—a deep and honest thinker—the same meaning and value they have always had for the sound common sense: Kant has never carried out with them any fraud or game.

Already in his previous work *The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God*, Kant expresses resolutely: «when one claims that every reality must be posited in the necessary being as a determination or, as a fundament by means of the same being, it remains undecided whether the properties of intellect and will should be considered as determinations pertaining to the highest being or effects produced by this being on the things. If the latter was true, we should acknowledge that its nature would be by far subordinate to the content that one has to think when he thinks of God, although the primacy of the highest being would shine before us for what makes of it the fundament for everything: its nature's completeness, unity, and

independence. Indeed. This original being lacking his own knowledge and will would be only a blind and necessary cause of any other thing and spirit, nor it would defer from the eternal destiny of the ancients, if not for a more intelligible description»[270].

The *Critique of pure reason* states: «since one is accustomed to understanding by the concept of God not some blindly working eternal **nature** as the **root** of things, but rather a highest being which is supposed to be the author of things **through** understanding and freedom—**and since this concept alone interests us**—one could, strictly speaking, refuse all belief in God to the **deist**, and leave him solely with the assertion of an original being or a highest cause. However, since no one should be charged with wanting to deny something just because he does not have the confidence to assert it, it is gentler and fairer to say that the **deist** believes in a **God**, but the theist in a **living God** (*summa intelligentia*)»[271].

I referred to these passages to be able to highlight emphatically that nobody at the time felt offended by the philosopher of Königsberg, nor disesteemed him or threw him away considering him a man of common sense only because he taught that the true God is a living God, who wills and knows, and says to himself: I **am** WHO I **am**; and who is not a mere IS, nor an absolute Not-I. On the contrary, it provoked some reaction merely due to the fact that he pointed out the inadequacy of all the proofs for the existence of the living God, the personal preservation of the human soul in a future world, and its power to freely determine itself in this world delivered by speculative philosophy until that point; moreover, he expounded not only with cogent arguments but irrefutably why it was impossible to demonstrate such theories with a direct method, i.e. theoretically.

To contrast this outrage and come to the aid of philosophy, so that along with its goals its existence does not also disappear, Kant replaced the loss of the theoretical proofs with the necessary postulates of a **pure practical** reason. He bestowed upon the latter primacy over the theoretical, i.e. he explained how all the propositions that deeply depend upon an a priori absolute practical law

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[270] Why in a more comprehensible way?
[271] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. P. Guyer and A.W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) B 661. Bold of Jacobi.

should be regarded by the theoretical reason as true; he called this acknowledgment pure rational faith (*Vernunftglauben*). With this, according to Kant's assurance, philosophy would have been completely safe and reached the goal, until then, always missed. By taking this step, philosophy overcomes childhood and youth (Dogmatism and Scepticism) and enters its mature age (the critical one)[272].

Yet also the natural daughter of the critical philosophy, the Doctrine of Science, disdained the aid that the father contrived. Without the Kantian postulates it brought purer and a more precise system of ethics than the one offered by the founder of critical philosophy and removed the fundament and the ground of the moral theology: «**the living and effective** (*wirklich*) **moral order became God himself**»: a God explicitly deprived of consciousness and personality (*Selbstseyn*); a God that is not a particular essence different from world and men, nor the **cause** (*Ursache*) of the moral order of the world; rather a God that is the pure and absolutely necessary world's order, which does not have fundament (*Grund*) nor any condition to its effective reality (*Wirklichkeit*). The act to ascribe to God consciousness, and what we name personality (*Persönlichkeit*)—even though in a higher degree—or reason (**being in itself and knowing itself**), in other words, to ascribe to him his own personality (*Selbstseyn*), knowledge and will means, according to the Doctrine of Science, to make him a finite essence. Thus, consciousness and personality are tied to limitation and finitude. The concept of God as a specific essence or, according to Kant's expression, a **living** God, to whom the perfection of self-consciousness and, thus, a personality of the highest degree are entitled is impossible and contradictory. It is permitted to overtly say that and put an end to all incessant chatter for the true religion of the cheerful right behaviour rises only along with that.[273]

These honest words had been pronounced twelve years ago manifestly and in public causing quite a stir. Yet, even then, the announcement was more sonorous than what was announced which

[272] Cf. I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 789; I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 215 and 225.
[273] Cf. *Philosophisches Journal* of Fichte and Niethammer, vol. VIII, fasc. 1, 1798.

immediately frightened a world already prepared for it due to fifteen years of study of critical philosophy. Very swiftly this terror calmed down and was the best occasion to confirm in the most striking way the truth of the Italian motto "una meraviglia dura tre giorni" [in italian]. Thereafter, no astonishment occurred when the **second** daughter of critical philosophy, who completely and strikingly abolished the difference established by the first daughter between philosophy of nature and moral philosophy, necessity and freedom, explained that: **there is nothing above nature, only nature exists**. It caused no shock at all.

In reality, this second daughter challenged the newly established moral theology in advance, sooner than the other, mocking its discoverer not without bitterness, because of his way in and way out. To him were both causes of offence at the same degrees: God, whom this philosophy strove to hold as true, and the philosophy itself, which wanted to assume such a **purpose** (*Zweck*)[274].

Since the time seemed to be right, this philosophy set up its **concept of philosophy straight against** the critical one. It claimed that philosophy had to begin with the presupposition of the existence of one being only -- apart from which nothing exists. In the case that this philosophy could prove the validity of this presupposition and eradicate whatever dualism there was, it had to declare its own collapse. The watchword of this new wisdom consisted in the release of nature from the supernatural, of the world from a cause out of and above it. It consisted, in one word, in the **autonomy of nature**.

Not without reason does the new system of the **Oneness** (*Alleinheit*) or absolute Identity boast of going back to the oldest philosophy (which is not to be held as the oldest **theory**). The oldest and well known speculative systems were certainly the naturalistic systems, speculative physics with this or some other structure, poems about the creation of the world acting the natural science **before** and **beyond** the experience: **Cosmogonies** – **Mythologies**.

274 Cf. *Philosophisches Journal eienr Gesellschaft teutscher Gelehrter*, ed. F.I. Niethammer. Heft 7, 1795.

Necessarily, the human understanding had to run this way by doing philosophy; it had no other way to develop itself and there was no other way for it to reach itself. Its birth was the birth of a world, and a birth of a world was its own. Only gradually, from a chaos of dark and confused feelings and representations, did the man who reflects on himself from all sides emerge, with an **Outside of him and** an **In him** which mutually influence themselves, along with the inseparable **I** and **Not-I**. We should remember the sublime **lesson on the dawn** given by Herder in the Oldest Document: read there the symbolic description of the history of the creation of the world and men in six steps or days, and it will appear in stirring clarity what here we can only sketch out.

But despite the inseparability of the internal from the external within human consciousness, the two speculative systems of **materialism** and **idealism**—**seemingly** opposed—are found in human understanding as a twin birth. If the **former** is the first to appear, the **latter** follows at its heels like Jacob follows Esau, and is pulled out at the same time. Indeed, he also had this advantage because, like **Zerah** the son of Tamar, had ostensibly stretched out his hand **for first**. Throughout the entire history of philosophy, we see these twins arguing and quarrelling with each other over the right of primogeniture -- which would provide the first with power and the second with subservience. It is not possible to bring to an end this quarrel and argument by means of a compromise or reconciliation; it has to be redeemed only with/it can only be redeemed through the destruction of the opposite claims. **Kant**'s effort aimed to do that.

A revolution in the speculative philosophy began with this very great man: his relevance and consequences were like those provoked by the Copernican revolution three centuries earlier whose effects were immediate in astronomy and indirect in all other sciences.

The core of Kantian philosophy consists in this truth led to the utmost evidence by its author: we conceive an object as long as we get it shaped before us in thought, inasmuch as we are able to produce it in the understanding. Now, we are unable in whatever manner, neither in our thought nor in the external reality, to produce any **substance**; we are only able to produce **out of us** movements and combinations of movements and forms by means of those movements, whereas **in**

us we can produce concepts and combinations of concepts related to perceptions obtained through outer or inner senses. Consequently, there can be only two sciences in the strict and real sense of the word: mathematics and general logic; the other scholarship earns the title of science in so far as it lets its object change—under a sort of process of transubstantiation—in mathematical and logical essences.

Obviously such transformation and transubstantiation cannot be performed with the proper objects of metaphysics: **God**, **freedom** and **immortality**. These three ideas lie completely out of the circle of those two sciences and they absolutely cannot be **actualized** through the medium of their tools. This means that it is as impossible to bestow effective reality (*Wirklichkeit*) on those three ideas by means of the principles of mathematics and general logic, as it is to posit this effective reality before us, perceiving it externally with our senses. **Science** remains completely neutral in view of these ideas, and it has to resign to take it upon itself to claim or refute their reality. With reason Kant can give himself credit to have indeed widened—even if apparently he limited—the use of reason, and to have made room for a **faith** that cannot be violated by the dogmatism of metaphysic as a result of abolition of **knowledge** in the field of the supersensible.

Long before Kant, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, G.B. Vico wrote: «we demonstrate geometry, because we make it; if we could demonstrate physics, we would make it. Therefore those who attempt to prove the existence of God have to be blamed for impious curiosity. We know the clarity of metaphysical truth as we know the light: through opaque things; for we do not know the light, but the bright things. Physical things are opaque, that is they have form and limit, and in them we see the light of metaphysical truth.»[275]

[275] Giovan Battista Vico, from Naples, royal professor of rhetoric, *De Antiquissima Italorum Sapientia ex Linguae Latinae Originibus Eruenda Libri Tres*, Naples 1710.
Kästner in the "Philosophisches Magazin" ed. by Eberhard, vol. II, 4, 402, ask the following question: «What is **possible** in geometry?» and answers as follows: Euclid would require Wolff, who thought of having demonstrated the possibility of the most perfect being, to **make this most perfect being**. Indeed in the same sense in which Euclid made the icosahedron, i.e. in understanding; it is not the case to **make** the most perfect being **outside**, since also the icosahedron does not need to be outside the understanding.

Even older than Vico's words are those of the profound (*tiefsinnig*) Pascal: «Ce qui passe la Géométrie nous surpasse»[276].

That such ideas were diffused hither and thither before Kant does not reduce the merit of the great author of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, just as the merit of Copernicus is not to be reduced because the old Italian school had taught that the Earth together with the other planets orbit around the sun before him, or that Philolaus' because a so-called Egyptian order of the world was known before him.[277] This comparison still says too little: Kant probably did not read that passage of Vico's; as for Copernicus, we know that through Plutarch he had been enlightened at first by some information about the theories of the Pythagoreans, and especially by the information concerning the Egyptians' astronomical conceptions that he had discovered in Martianus Capella.

Only one step further ought to be taken from the discovery made by Kant, according to which we see and conceive perfectly what we are able to build up, to the system of identity. The Kantian criticism developed with strict consequentiality had to give rise to the **Doctrine of Science**, which, rigorously carried out, should have the doctrine of the **Oneness** *(Alleinheit*) as consequence, an inverted or transfigured Spinozism, namely an **idealistic materialism**.

Yet, the one who thoroughly reflects on that will ask: how can it be possible that a man like Kant, with such a powerful mind and philosophical acumen, had not become aware of the not remote results his philosophy would have led to; and that, otherwise, he had himself not wholly accepted it, in order to give his system of theories that perfection without which that system would not have lasted? We cannot accept that while completing his *Critique* he had well reached from a great distance a view that the *summum jus* of its doctrine must have led to; but then, shocked by the *summa injuria* tied up to that, he had struggled to find another appropriate explanation, in a similar but gentler way. He was too principled to deceive himself and others in such a way. He was also

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276 Pascal, *Pensées*, P. I Art. 2: Reflexions sur la Geometrie en general, ed. 1779.

277 Nicetas from Syracuse (or as Ernesti believed to read, Iceta) should be mentioned earlier than Philolaus. He already asserted that: cum terra circum axem se summa celeritate convertat et torqueat, eadem effici Omnia, quasi statue terra coelom moveretur. Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Academia*, *Quaestio* L. IV, c. 39. [Marginal note of Martini].

much too wise and prudent, and knew what would not have lasted. The conundrum needs a more satisfying solution.

Few hints of such a solution I already gave in the writing to Fichte (Vorbericht S. VI-X.) and in the treatise *On Critique's Attempt to Reduce Reason to the Understanding* (Reinholds Beytr. Heft III. S. 11-13). Since then, two excellent men have extensively discussed this subject matter: **Bouterwek** in his **memorial** to the philosopher of Köningsberg (Hamburg 1805) and **Fries** in his *New Critique of Reason* (in three parts, Heidelberg 1807). These two men have explained the issue so completely and instructively with regard to the whole system of philosophy that I would be allowed to refer to them only if the peculiar aim of my writing had not required something more.

I want to start from a passage of Bouterwek's memorial, on page 85 where he claims: «according to the consequent development of the Kantian system, the new idealism (which is **ideal-materialism**, thus called **System of Identity**) can be logically deduced. But this consequence is as alien to the spirit of the Kantian philosophy as **Quietism** and Spiritism».

In my opinion, **what I have so far suggested** can be expressed more generally, clearly, and rigorously: Plato's doctrine is opposed to the doctrine of Spinoza, as much as the **spirit** of the Kantian philosophy is opposed to the spirit of the doctrine of Oneness.

This opposition, so striking and sharp, works as a confirmation that Kant, at the beginning of his doctrine of the ideas, explicitly refers to Plato as his **precursor**, as much as the author of the new doctrine of Oneness explicitly and repeatedly refers to Spinoza as **his** precursor.[278]

«Plato, states Kant, made use of the expression idea in such a way we can readily see that he understood by it something that not only could never be borrowed from the senses, but that even goes far beyond the concepts of the understanding (with which Aristotle occupied himself), since nothing encountered in experience could ever be congruent to it. Ideas for him are archetypes of things themselves, and not, like the categories, merely the key to possible experiences. In his

[278] See Insert A.

opinion they flowed from the highest reason, through which human reason partakes in them; our reason, however, now no longer finds itself in its original state, but must call back with toil the old, now very obscure ideas though a recollection (which is called philosophy). I do not wish to go into any literary investigation here, in order to make out the sense which the sublime philosopher combined with his word. I note only that when we compare the thoughts that an author expresses about a subject, in ordinary speech as well as in writings, it is not at all unusual to find that we understand him even better than he understood himself, since he may not have determined his concept sufficiently and hence sometimes spoke, or even thought, contrary to his own intention.» (B 370)

«Plato—he adds—noted very well that our power of cognition feels a far higher need than that of merely spelling out appearances according to a synthetic unity in order to be able to read them as experience, and that our reason naturally exalts itself to cognitions that go much too far for any object that experience can give ever to be congruent, but that nonetheless have reality and are by no means merely fragments of the brain»

Kant followed Plato and believed to have understood him better than he had understood himself. In the Introduction to his critique of reason he straightaway left us to understand that, in his opinion, Plato had misunderstood himself: «the light dove, in free flight cutting through the air the resistance of which it feels, could get the idea that it could do even better in airless space. **Likewise, Plato abandoned the world of the senses because it set such narrow limits for the understanding, and dared to go beyond it on the wings of the ideas, in the empty space of pure understanding**. He did not notice that he made no headway by his efforts, for he had no resistance, no support, as it were, by which he could stiffen himself, and to which he could apply his powers in order to put his understanding into motion [c.d.J.]» (B 8-9).

Because of his unshakable conviction that reason, as **faculty of cognition** (*Erkenntnissvermögen*), relates to nothing but the understanding, and since his opinion was that reason—once beyond the empirical experience—can only **fantasize**, Kant should have seen and

thought this way. It is astonishing that in his system, the understanding was not even able to obtain true knowledge, for the concepts of understanding hold their validity only at the base of intuition, and intuition does not convey anything real but gives only representations (*Vorstellungen*) of phenomena (*Erscheinungen*), i.e. **mere** representations, which, be they pure or empirical, «do not hold or find absolutely anything of what concerns a thing (*Ding*) in itself», nothing that belongs to that thing. With regard to those representations whether or not an **independent** object **outside** the representations does exist is still problematic. This issue conceived under those conditions is simply futile and naïve, for it won't lead to any objective knowledge.

Hence, it happens that Kant, according to the appropriate expression of Bouterwek, «swayed between the absolute reality that, to him, the human understanding should be cut off from, and the sensible perception, above which he needs still rise up, and yet standing between earth and sky he consequently lost both.»[279]

Kant himself kept denying that firmly, and not just by words. He was convinced of that in the innermost part of his mind where those solid beliefs—from which he moved—had remained for him unshakeable. Namely, on the one hand, the conviction that it was inconsistent to accept the **phenomena independently from what they show** (KrV Vorr, s. XXVII); on the other, the conviction that reason could not have possibly existed, and its name would have been only a bare

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279 Here the passage: «As the real poet directs his glance, according to Shakespeare's expression, from the earth toward the sky and from the sky toward the earth, and **then** pulls down in the real existence the forms of unknown things that his phantasy breeds, and gives a place and a name to the airy nothing. And so Kant, the cold thinker, disdaining all poetry in philosophy, turns his eyes from the boundaries of objectivity, which binds our senses, up to the unconditioned, infinite and eternal, and from there down again to those limits. He was convinced to discover the impossibility, to pull the infinite and the eternal—that is what pure reason thinks to be: the absolute and the necessary based on themselves? only—down to the sphere of the cognizable. The goal of his intellectual aspiration is to grasp in a **scientific** system the sum of all **conditions of possibility** of human knowledge within those boundaries for lack of an absolute reality. According to some intelligent anti-Kantians, he did not gain more than Shakespeare obtained: Kant also lost both the sky and the earth, dwelling in between, and since he proved—or, believed to prove—the impossibility to know the absolute reality and set just the **phenomena** of the real within the system of **pure forms** of cognoscibility. He did not want to be a poet, and nevertheless gave the nothing a name and a place as required by the academic. And yet, assuming that—even though it is not the place to speak about it—Kant, thanks to the giant work of his mind, has on the one hand systematized only the forms of human understanding and, on the other, only a little, or not at all, contributed to the clarification of the **ultimate grounds** of human knowledge, then we should acknowledge that no speculative mind before Kant had ever thought of such a system of all human knowledge. This system, so audaciously planed and cunningly designed, could be achieved only by means of such an imagination, being able to **stretch** the understanding between the absolute reality –that it is cut off from—and sensible perception—beyond which it should rise; therefore, this great theoretical work could only be built on concepts…» and so forth. (Cf. Friedrich Bouterwek, *Immanuel Kant. Ein Denkmal* (Hoffmann: Hamburg, 1805), 25-29).

echo, if its ideas—God, freedom and immortality, which it produces, and because of which it is called **reason**, the **ultimate** faculty of cognition, the **spirit** of men—had been mere illusions without content, false pretences destined to deceive and trick, with no reliability whatsoever. He then optimistically claimed that the science, that deals with the demonstration of those ideas essentially produced by reason, is the oldest: it should remain the last and would last even in the event that the other sciences be sunk all together in the jaws of a devastating barbarism (Vorr. S. XIV, XV).

Basically, Kant assumes that in human reason dwells an immediate knowledge—of both reality in general and its supreme cause, of a nature **under** and a God **over** that knowledge—**valid as a law for its truth, above all error**.[280] Since immediate knowledge as well as original and first cognition reject all proofs—for the latter would then become the first and original element, i.e. the origin of knowledge—Kant was thus able to introduce in philosophical **science**—which was in need of proofs or consecration—those **fundamental truths** that **determine reason itself**. That science does not approve any truth but one established indirectly by the testimony of **at least** two witnesses; that is to say, he was able to develop a mediated knowledge starting from an immediate one by granting practical reason primacy over the theoretical. This way, he gave at least the pretence of a scientific origination of those truths, whereas in reality through the introduction of such primacy only the immediate feeling of the true, the good, and the positive revelation of the reason had been properly raised over every scientific proof pros and cons, over every persuasion and objection of the quibbling understanding.

Therefore, Kant, as he subjected reason to the understanding in the **theoretical** part of his philosophy by making the former a mere maiden of the latter, actually reduced that faculty of cognition to less than nothing and assigned to it only the capacity to **produce** illusory **phantasies** in the reign that transcends the senses, i.e. where the understanding has its domain. In the practical

[280] See Jakob Friedrich Fries, *Neue Kritik der Vernunft* (Heidelberg: Mohr und Zimmer, 1807), vol. I, 199-207.

part, he elevated reason over the understanding once again which did not have anything to claim anymore since reason had independently established a *sic volo*, *sic jubeo*, *sic est*.[281]

Twice Kant was right, and therefore, he was wrong. The fact that Kant did not develop his twofold right into a simple but **complete** right, but instead, kept holding the whole ambiguity -divided and equivocal- till the end of his days belongs to the most instructive events in the history of philosophy.

One would suppose that both the value of the scientific proofs and the way in which by means of them our knowledge can reach in any field merely an explanation and not an increase of content—to say nothing of a ground for it— should have stood clearly before his eyes, for this acute man for the first time thoroughly reached a clear view of the conditions, qualities, and carefully determined limits of any humanly possible **scientific** knowledge. If it had been the case, he could not possibly have had in mind either a Refutation of Idealism—passing off that lack as a scandal for philosophy—or a renewal of those sad complaints about the fact that the human reason—fortunately—presupposes those ideas of God, immortality, and freedom which are essentially immanent in it. **Unfortunately**, that reason can demonstrate theoretically neither the reality nor the objectivity of these ideas, nor can it **prove** their validity. The search for a **proof** of the existence of a real world which matches our representations—albeit being external to them—and the existence of its magnificent creator above it, as well as any search for immortality and freedom of human spirit, should have meant foolishness to him and his real followers. And even the desire for a demonstration or a proof of these things vanished as an inconsistency. It had become clear—and any spirit willing to go deeper without prejudice should have borne it in mind—that these truths either should have been accepted as originating from the authority of immediate reason—whose cognition does not need proofs because it is a supreme knowledge, **independent of any feature**—or should have been thrown away like empty deceits. What was already clear regardless of the

[281] Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (Riga: Hartknoch, 1788), 258.

Kantian discovery could have been demonstrated in a more structured and persuasive way, namely: **how** and **why** any effort to **demonstrate** as true knowledge the uppermost cognitions—which means to **deduce** them, or trace them back to something more cogent and truer—had been in itself absurd, and meant nothing but look for their destruction.

Every time something has to be proved, one needs an argument that the proof is based **on**. This argument includes what needs a proof in itself and spreads over it truth and certainty, so that the latter acquires a reality out of that argument.

For instance, if **effective existence** has to be proved, then something should be found outside what has to be proved: it has to be something able to shield it, as much as the mediated knowledge is shielded by the immediate, the concept by the thing; or **covered**, as happens in geometry where a figure covers the other to show their equivalence and correspondence. Therefore, it should be found that an **item** that is one and the same **with the other**, and still not one and the same: an effective real outside the effective real, that would be more real than the real, and yet at the same time only the very real.

Likewise, if the existence of a living God has to be proved, then God himself should be deduced and demonstrated from something and expounded as from this principle (*Princip*): we then could grant that principle as his ground (*Grund*) which would be before and above him. Thus, the mere **deduction** of the **idea** of a living God from the structure of the faculty of human knowledge does not lead to a demonstration of his true existence, but on the contrary (assuming the demonstration succeeded) to the necessary destruction of the natural faith in the living God whose growth and strengthening were sought by means of a philosophical proof. Indeed, it shows with great clarity how this idea is an absolutely subjective product of the human spirit, pure **poetry**, which the human spirit necessarily composes according to its nature. Perhaps, it is **at the most** a poetry (*Dichtung*) of the true and, consequently, not a mere phantasy (*Hirngespinst*); but maybe, it is most likely—or even more probable— only a mere poem and, consequently, solely a phantasy.

I claim: **that it is maybe most likely—or even more probable—only a mere poem, and, consequently, solely a phantasy**, because if a possibility for an objective meaning of the ideas and the pure concepts of reason should be spared with that, then first we should reject the objective meaning of the original concepts of the understanding—or categories—and, as consequence, also the reality of nature and its laws. Thus, we should deny that the understanding is somehow the faculty of cognizing the **true**.

In that consists the issue Kant has with himself, in the difference between the **spirit** and the **letter** of his doctrine: as a **man**, Kant believes unconditionally in the immediate positive revelations of reason and its fundamental judgments, and he has never lost this belief—or, however, not at all or definitely. As a teacher of philosophy, he considered it necessary to transform this purely revealed and independent knowledge into a dependent proof, and the immediate known in a mediated known. He wanted reason to be underpinned by the understanding, and then to build the understanding up by means of the reason. Only afterwards, does the primacy or the very highest dignity of reason arise which we should take as the one and only universal fundament: the origin of all principles. And it would have been applied only under the condition of an agreement with the understanding. Yet, such an agreement (because of which primacy would basically be neutralized and abducted) could not succeed—since it was **not** sealed out of a mutual **reservation**, but rather, out of a mutual **renunciation to either utterly negate or utterly affirm**. It was not a way out of the fact that the understanding absolutely and entirely stood opposite to that imposition of reason by means of its *Veto*, **which in advance should be due to it**. Practical reason could not recreate to the belief outside the field of science and knowledge what the theoretical (understanding) had destroyed for science and knowledge. The doctrines of God, immortality, and freedom had to be abolished right away. What remained was **only** the **doctrine of nature**, **the philosophy of nature**.

And even that did not remain, because the understanding—in order to grant validity, even if only **problematic**, to the ideas of reason—should have realized beforehand the **absolute invalidity** of its own knowledge, its complete emptiness and nullity as knowledge of the real (*Real*), of an

effective objective existing by itself beyond the mere representation. In this view, the understanding came only through a mere self-clarification. Indeed, really and completely getting to the bottom of itself for the first time, it had discovered that what until then was called **nature,** and its necessary laws was nothing but the human mind (*Gemüth*) together with its own subjective representations, concepts, and connections. That which up to that time was nature—**conceived** as objective—vanished for good with its essence and its entire work and, once drawn apart from external sensation, disappeared at the presence of the philosophizing understanding. With regard to the faculty of cognition the knower and the known eventually dissolved into a shapeless activity of imagining images, and **objectively** in pure nothing. What remained was only a wonderful intellectual domain of wonderful intellectual dreams, lacking explanation and meaning.[282]

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Our great critic was thus close to a view and a result **effectively fulfilling** the aim of philosophy. A crucial result, which gave the man the option to accept **either** a nothing revealing itself anywhere, **or** a truthful God, the only and universal truth maker (*wahrmachend*). He came so close to this view, yet not as much as to really and truly achieve it—close to this crucial result, without grasping or acquiring it, or revealing it as the synthesis of his doctrine!

The reason that prevented from acquiring a real gain from that view—the reason that makes him prefer to elaborate the highly artificial solution of transcendental idealism, which in reality locked everything tighter up instead of opening it—is clearly explained in that chapter of his Critique where he sets the focus of **reason** against that of **science** (understanding), **Platonism**

[282] «If we don't assume that in the whole universe prevails an original type of sensibility connected to the original conditions for any possible organic form, then we can skeptically consider the laws, according to which our reason integrates within our sensibility into an experience, as nothing but subjective laws of our representations, i.e. we are allowed to assume that all is displayed by these laws as true could appear false to other creature differently structured although rational in their own way. Yet, once admitted it, the foundations our faith in truth would be shaken.» (Friedrich Bouterwek. *Ideen zur Metaphysik des Schoenen* (Martini: Leipzig, 1807), 110).

against **Epicureanism**, presuming to be the **representative of the science** of the latter against the former, of **Naturalism** against **Theism**.

«Each of the two says more than it knows, but in such a way that the first (Epicureanism or Naturalism) encourages and furthers **knowledge**, though to the disadvantage of the practical, the second (Platonism or Theism) provides principles which are indeed excellent for the practical, but in so doing **allows** reason, in regard to that of which only a speculative (true positive) knowledge is granted us, to indulge in ideal explanations of natural appearances, and to neglect the physical investigation of them.»[283]

Rightly, Kant was against Theism, which accords the latter to reason, and corrupts and perverts it—as elsewhere mentioned. Only the real Theism, **Platonism**, is not such a seducer but rather, it alone gives **science what belongs to science**, and to **God or spirit what belongs to God or spirit** in the most scrupulous and safest way.[284]

Where reason really refers **merely** to the understanding, and this latter merely to sensation (K.r.V, B 671, 692), where reason **gradually rises up** to the ideas over the natural phenomena

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[283] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 500. Partially modified by Jacobi.

[284] «Science of the ideas is the highest in our spirit, it's yet not possible a **science** of the ideas as principles, but only a faith (or a firm belief more solid than any science. Cf. J.F. Fries, *Neu Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, vol. II, 324). Any science belongs to nature, i.e. the phenomena, etc.» Fries claimed in *Ueber die neuesten Lehre von Gott und der Welt* (Heidelberg: Mohr und Zimmer, 1807), 64, to confront to the *Neu Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, vol. II, § 101, 82 and ff., where three kinds of belief (*Überzeugung*) are elucidated: 1) the belief that understanding infers from intuition, 2) the belief that reason infers from itself by means of a completely reflected assent (*Fürwahrhalten*) without intuition, which is the **pure rational faith** (*reiner Vernunftglaube*), 3) the belief that the transcendental judgment, that is called presentiment (*Ahndung*), can become conscious of its peculiar and complete certainty just through the feeling, without any defined concept (S Bd. I s. 34 und ff., chapter: *Theorie des Gefuhls*).
These three ways of belief» says Fries in the final chapter «in our spirit have the same degree of necessary certainty… The prejudice on behalf of the knowledge is due to the aesthetic distinctness, the illuminating and general intelligibility of the sensible intuition, which doesn't really make any difference. Far way from believing that the pure rational faith be a more unsure assent than the knowledge, we believe it's rather the most solid we have, as it has its source in the essence of the reason. We wouldn't have any knowledge if there wasn't already an element of the rational faith, a belief out of the mere reason beyond senses. Even the presentiment owns the same degree of certainty that belongs to the belief, albeit it should part with the completeness concerning the determination of the object. It is assent referred just to the relation between the faith and the knowledge, and it cannot count in general, as it emerges from the consciousness of the boundaries our own knowledge. We know yet that no human reason shall succeed by itself in the **salto mortale** to resolve the secrets of the presentiment. The summit of the human wisdom is to know what we don't know, and what we cannot know if we don't change our own essence beforehand.» (See also § 131, 195-199; further, 222, 223).
In my personal and pretty different opinion, knowledge, faith and presentiment differ from one another, and connect with each other and together with the cognition (*Erkenntniss*) of the true, as I explained in my writing to Fichte. See especially pages 27-32 of the letter and VIII-X of the preliminary report. And see at the end of this work in the Beylage A.

(K.r.V. B 491), there Kant is perfectly right, even against Plato. The ideas are thus mere concepts of the understanding, lacking a objective validity: hence, science cannot seriously be warned against the traps those ideas are able to set. In reality, if the Kantian deduction is right about the ideas, then there is nothing more absurd than to move from those ideas with the intention of putting them above science.[285] Nevertheless, according to the Kantian argument, we renounce to hold the ideas **as original knowledge of objective validity** and necessarily reverse the aforementioned **alternative**: the revealed nothing takes the place of God and all supersensible or **supernatural**; the true and effective takes the place of what can be grasped by means of intuition, which is **the nature that objectively expresses itself**. As a consistent thinker, Kant should have taken the latter as a conclusion according to his principal presupposition, which we identified as an insuperable prejudice; according to the same necessity he would have become the father of Ideal-Materialismus, or the doctrine of the absolute identity or the All-Oneness (*All-Einheitslehre*) which appeared with much sensation only in two generations after him. Everything hinges on what with exceptional clarity reveals for **first** and what **follows** or comes for **second**; **nature** or **intelligence**. Either « reason itself arose from the lap of nature, and it is nothing but the complete development of sensation», or it arose immediately from God and stands between him and his visible work—nature—perceiving and testifying for both with the certainty of her [of the reason] very existence.[286]

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Plato states that atheism came among men because they had been deceptively persuaded that the first is not the first, the subsequent is not the subsequent; up until then they were persuaded

[285] Even though ideas are considered as original concepts, objectively valid and innate in man, they cannot be reduce to any **science**, and consequently the latter is always a copy of nature, even in its highest completion; and it cannot be drawn through a complete reflection from other sources but the nature itself, i.e. its sensible—pure or empiric—intuition.

[286] «We know in advance of God and the world, before any further scientific education, and we don't let it be taken, that God is the absolute substantial highest essence, **superior to world**. We know in advance also that any doctrine of God which submits God's existence to a law or destiny is wrong, as well as any doctrine which involves a total or partial deification of the world is false» (J.F. Fries, *Ueber die neuesten lehre von Gott und die Welt*, 35).

that they were wrong in considering nature—which is the only **producer**—as something **produced** and, on the contrary, the produced—which is the understanding, the **intelligence**, which **merely reflects** and **imitates nature**—as the producer and first creator.[287]

Aristotle notes: up until Anaxagoras, all the old Greek philosophers, including the **Pythagoreans**, had taken as most perfect not the principle **out of which** everything comes into being, but **that which** originated, like plants, animals etc.. Everyone had laid as ground (*Grund*) a matter moving irregularly, a chaos, through which a **world**, a **cosmos** (*Geordnetes*) would had gradually emerged. Different schools had different systems or **theories of creation**; but all had in common the fact **that they placed the principle of every formation in the original matter**. **Anaxagoras was the first to place this principle outside of matter**.

«For it is perhaps unlikely that Fire or Earth or any other such should cause things to be or become good or noble or that those thinkers should have thought so; nor again was it right to entrust a matter of such importance to chance or to luck. When someone said that Intelligence exists in nature, as in animals, and that He is the cause of the arrangement and of every kind of order in nature, he appeared like a sober man in contrast to his predecessors who talked **erratically**. We know that **Anaxagoras** openly made these statements.»[288]

In the fourteenth book of the same text (chapter IV) Aristotle claims: «there is a difficulty, even for the expert researcher, how the elements and principles are related to the good and the noble; and the difficulty is this: whether there is in the principles and elements something like what we mean by the good itself and the best itself, or whether this is not so, but these are later in generation. The modern theologians seem to consider this issue decisive: **this is not so but that the good and the noble appeared after the nature of things progressed**. And they say this to avoid a real difficulty which confronts those who say, as some do, that the One is a principle. The difficulty

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287 Plato, *De Legibus*, L. X. 891e.

288 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, ed. Hippocrates G. Apostle (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966) Book I, 3. Cf. G.G. Fülleborn, *Beiträge*, fasc. II, 160-161, and W.G. Tennemann, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, I, 117-119 along with the Aristotelian remarks aforementioned. Cf. W.G. Tennemann, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, 298 and ff., the section of Anaxagoras' philosophy.

arises not because they posit the good as belonging to the principle, but because it is the One that they posit as principle, and a principle in the sense of an element, and because they generate Numbers from the One.

In this respect, the early poets agree in saying that the good belongs not to those who were first, as, for example, to Night and Uranos, or to Chaos, or to Ocean, but to Zeus, in so far as he is a ruler. These poets speak in a mixed and not completely mythical fashion and posit the first generator as the best, as Pherecydes and some others do, and also as the Magi [289].»

The difference expressed here by Aristotle is of the greatest relevance and seals the issue. There can only be two categories of philosophers: those who have emerged and gradually developed the more perfect from the imperfect; and those who assert that the most perfect is the first, and that all starts with it and from it. In other words, those latter claim that what is presupposed is not **a nature of things** as a very beginning, but rather a moral principle (*Principium*) is the very beginning of everything, an intelligence that wisely wills and effects – a **God**-Creator.[290]

The doctrine of the former category is opposed to the doctrine of the latter, so that no approach is possible in between, and even less possible is a unification of them through a third doctrine where they reconcile and become undifferentiated.

The crucial issue is this: whether at the beginning was the **deed** (*That*) and not the will, or the **will** and the deed came after, as a subsequent.

To free this opposition as much as possible from the bond to that age, we want to question it otherwise, namely: should we assume, as **Spinoza** did, that the will only **accompanies** the deed, so that the former is caused, led and governed by the latter, or should we side together with **Plato** and claim the exact opposite?[291]

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[289] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book 14, 4. With these philosophers, who are called **theologians** by Aristotle because their researches have the first cause as subject matter, deals Plato in the tenth book of the Laws mentioned above. [Translation modified to match Jacobi's quotation]

[290] See the mentioned tenth book of the Law of Plato, from the beginning till the end.

[291] Cf. Plato, *Timaeus*, 30b, and *Laws*, 897a.

The will presupposes the understanding, an insight and an intention. **A non-voluntary action** (*Handlung*)**, not predetermined, is a blind action, whether or not joined up with consciousness**.

Our issue has to be expressed with regard to the universe (*Weltall*): does the universe exist through an independent mechanism decided in itself, having outside of it neither cause nor goal; or does it exist for the sake of the Good and Beautiful, the work of Providence, the creation of a God?

The healthy reason, which trusts itself absolutely, answers the latter in the affirmative. Therefore this opinion was the older, thus theism as **faith**, precedes naturalism as **philosophy**. The latter, naturalism, took shape together with **science**; it started as science began to grow and became the **first philosophy** as already mentioned in this essay.

Yet, if this very science should be refined into a system deduced from one principle, perfect in itself, comprehensive of everything knowable, then naturalism would reach its perfection together with that science. All had to be developed as though it were **one**, and all could be conceived and understood on the basis of that **one**.

Therefore, it is in the best interest of **science** that God does not exist, nor any supernatural, extramundane essence dwelling outside the world. Only under the condition that **nature** alone, independent and all-embracing exists, can science reach its goal of perfection and be proud of being its own subject matter and **all-embracing**.

Even the **theist**, **as a naturalist**, presupposes the autonomy of nature inasmuch as and to such an extent that he severely prevents himself from understanding and explaining **in** nature anything different from it. At the same time, he acknowledges as a **law of science** that it does not want to know about God and, on the whole, the supernatural because—as nature is **a reflection** [*Reflex*] **of the first**—it necessarily ceases where the other begins.[292] Nevertheless, he demands the

[292] A cognition [*Wissen*] of the supernatural, God and divine things is available, and this knowledge is the most certain in human spirit, a knowledge that is absolute, that immediately arises from the human reason; and yet to this knowledge cannot be given the form of a science. [Addition of *Werke*]. On this text please see pp. 59-60, and also *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 828-831; B 856-859.

naturalist to do the same, who in turn dogmatically claims: **everything is nature; nothing is outside or above nature**. Indeed, he demands him to thoroughly abstain from using terms borrowed from theism by reporting his doctrine and from shifting and actually turning it into a **wrong doctrine**; all that would not occur if the language were unadulterated: nobody would be deceived by it.[293]

That **clear and bare sincere naturalism**—which does not mislead or deceive but, undisguised, reveals itself to itself—conceived as **speculative doctrine** stands next to theism without harm. It can proudly and with contempt cast theism aside, and explain that neither does it have anything to do with theism nor does it want to deal with it: theism is only a spectre and not a true **scientific** essence. The wise man would not mind. Naturalism alone has to keep the same sincere and impertinent language to hold its impunity: it must never talk about God, neither about divine things, nor freedom, neither about moral good and evil, nor true morality, as all these things according to its innermost belief do not exist,[294] and by talking about them it says what in reality it does not mean. And whoever says what he does not think is a liar.

As for the **fundamental claim** of naturalism, there are no two meanings or [any] ambiguity. This fundamental claim has already been mentioned and is universally known: nature is autonomous (*selbstständig*) and self-sufficient in itself; it **is one and all, and nothing exists outside [of it]**.

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293 «A sober atheism is perfectly in line with the understanding, when it results from an intellectual strive for a complete insight. But the poetic and mystic atheism, which is called religion, is unbecoming of a philosopher and is a harmful seducer because it denies to man the need for pure truth, in order to delight him with intuitions with which a quick wit can do whatever it wants. Such a atheism not only favors that mad faith (*GlaubensWahn*), that shows just a poetic side, but it knows how to fraternize with that faith according to time and circumstances by means of poetic phrases, whose meaning remains definitely prosaic. This simple religion of faith and hope, which rising from a **moral** certainty [*Zuversicht*] is intolerable to this kind of religiosity… But also **the** religion, which is sincere and genuine **faith in God**, won't perish as long as humankind does not perish». F. Bouterwek, *Immanuel Kant. Ein Denkmal*, 124.

294 «The system that teaches that all is one (it calls itself Naturalism, Pantheism, Spinozism, or whatever name it wants) inevitably cancels the difference between good and evil, although it is not affirmed in words. In fact, if all is one, than all is good, and any appearance of what we call good and evil is only an empty deceit. From all that arises its spoiling influence on life, indeed, if we remain loyal to this ruinous principle, we can turn around in expressions or follow the faith emerged everywhere from the voice of the consciousness, but man's actions will have to be considered indifferent, while every difference between good and evil, right and wrong will have to be erased and declared invalid.» Friedrich von Schlegel, *Ueber die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*, (Heidelberg: Mohr und Zimmer, 1808), 127, 97, 98, 114.

Therewith the concept (*Begriff*) of nature – what it includes or **necessarily excludes** – is absolutely neither given nor defined. Thus, both the statement according to which this concept includes in itself absolutely **everything**, except the absolute nothing, and the explanation affirming that nature is the sum of (*Inbegriff*) every being, activity and becoming, of what springs up and dies out, will not satisfy any real thinker. Such a thinker knows that Aristotle rightly demands explanations which indicate the **genus** and the **differentia** of an object. Yet here, neither is present because everything objective is missing. We hold as the **positive** content of the concept of nature a bare not-nothing; and as **negative**, we hold the **absolute** nothing, without any distinctive mark (*Merkmale*), so as to differentiate the former from the latter. Nonetheless, according to the statement, both should mutually determine themselves within the concept, realizing together their possibility.

To remedy this lack, the aforementioned explanation should be rejected and substituted with one claiming that nature is by no means the sum of every being because such a sum is impossible, and would have as its object a motionless absurdity (*Unding*). Moreover, it is not even the eternal activity (*Wirken*) and becoming of things, as though it had existence as intention. On the contrary, it abhors any existence, and so also any intention: nature is the sole and only **generation** (*Hervorbringen*) **as such**, the **pure** generation without intention, the **absolute productivity**. Only to this **absolute productivity,** without object and subject, independent a parte ante as well as a parte post, can be ascribed a true **being**. As to its products, the infinite number of individual beings, they have no being at all. The latter, as such, **do not** truly exist. It follows that there cannot be a **sum of** all beings, but rather that there can only be a unique, eternal and immutable **being**; **the being of the absolute productivity**. – I say: if we wanted to remedy that way, we would move from one problem to another that would be, if possible, even worse.

Indeed, while the absolute productivity is one and all, the infinity of its products from everlasting to everlasting is, as such, nothing. Thus one asks: what should the **deed** (*That*) of this absolute productivity, the worth and object of its infinite activity, truly consist in? Attributes and paraphrases will not remove those and other questions, on the contrary they will only increase them.

So if one proclaims to us, as it were the higher and deeper revelation of the doctrine: nature, or the absolute productivity, **is the elemental power of the world, holy and eternally creating, which produces all things from itself, operatively generating; it is the only true God, the living one**. The God of theism on the other hand would be only a fatuous idol, a reason degrading fantasy. Hence, after listening to these words we could not remain silent; on the contrary, we found a reason to ask even more urgent questions about the **works** of such a God: whether they should be **one** and the **same** with him or not; whether they should be present only **in** him or **outside [of]** him.

If they are present only **in** him, then they are only bare alterations (*Veränderungen*), modifications of himself. Thus nothing would be created but **time**!

One should consider that the only **true** and living God (Nature) can neither increase nor reduce itself, neither improve nor degrade, but rather this God, which is equal to Nature, or Universe, remains always one and the same with regard to quality and quantity, from everlasting to everlasting. Therefore it would be impossible for a change to occur, and for God to come up as a transformative power (*Veränderungskraft*) if he were not the changeability, the **temporality** and the modification itself. This changeability is itself, so we were told, in its **root** something **unchangeable**, i.e. the holy and eternally productive elemental power of the world. On the other hand, in its **outcome**, in the explicit effective world, it is an absolute **changeability**, so that in every determined moment the whole of the essence is nothing. According to this, it is indisputable that for the naturalists God's creative Word (*Schöpferwort*) proclaims from everlasting to everlasting: **let there be nothing**! He evokes **nothing out of being**, like the God of the theists who **gives birth to being out of nothing**.

Therefore, we find ourselves once again forced to make a decision: either to assume the revealed nothing as the only true in itself, or to declare as unacceptable the opinion that nature is everything and that nothing is above or outside of it. To be sure, it is clear to the impartial observer that if nature is not like the holy and eternally productive elemental power of the world, which generates and actively gives rise to all things out of itself, and if the world, with everything that is within it, **does not** exist in any moment of its **effective and explicit existence**, then the **productive**

cause of this world—which moves from everlasting to everlasting, from a form of nothing to another form of nothing—is also void (*nichtig*) in the same way as its work. The whole essence of this cause is nothing but its activity (*Wirken*); it endlessly accomplishes all that it is able to accomplish. Its today is not any more perfect than its yesterday, and its tomorrow will not be any more perfect than its today. In fact, it does not cause anything, it only eternally modifies itself; that means, as already stated, **it only eternally generates time**. An unceasing production of this mutation is its only life and the only content of its life: it lives and does all that it does only through this; it does not have a higher aim, nor does it have a **content** for its life.

We have come to this result as we thoroughly tried to determine the concept of nature conceived as an **independent** essence which does not presuppose anything outside itself as its cause, and does not produce anything outside itself as its effect, but rather it itself is every cause and effect, world and world creator at the same time: it is the utter indifference (*Einerley*) of these two. At the basis of this idea we found an identity (an idem esse) of being and nothing, which has to be, not the identity of the revealed nothing, but the identity of the unconditioned and the conditioned, of necessity and freedom; it has to be **truly** the identity of reason and un-reason, of good and evil, of thing and no-thing (*Unding*).

Indeed! We should more explicitly and carefully restate «**the identity of reason and un-reason**, **good and evil**, **thing and no-thing**» because only on that opposition and imperishable **dualism of supernatural and natural**, **freedom and necessity**, **providence and blind destiny**, **or chance**[295], is human reason founded. It moves from these oppositions **which constitute with each other one and the same opposition**. As a result, **reality** is lost together with **objectivity** and perfect truthfulness of the original contrast between what is natural and what is supernatural, **or** between

295 Chance is the opposite of **intention**, not of **necessity**. It is a term with the same meaning as blind destiny. We say that we succeed in something by chance or by blind destiny when we cause something unintentionally or unaware, when something springs up from us but unintended and unforeseen. An unintentional cause is a blind operation, not an action. We do not say that nature **acts**, but just that it is **active** (*wirke*). Therefore follows the opposition between its products, risen from the laws of necessity with no freedom, and the works of **art** or **providence**, risen from and with free will (*freiem Willen*). Every epoch, in which there had been philosophy, had its philosophers who esteemed the unconscious and unwilled activity higher than the conscious and intentional one, because the first appeared to them as the original [one] (*Ursprünglich*). Cf. the Supplement B.

necessity and freedom, **or** between providence and blind destiny. What is lost is the reality of reason itself, its truthfulness and dignity. And therefore with and through that loss, man would not hold before the irrational animal but mistakes and lies.

To shed light on the truth of this claim, we want to take a closer look at the general division into the rational and irrational of living beings on earth.

Unanimously, we call **rational** that being in whose consciousness we find clearly expressed the aforementioned opposition—introduced in many ways, but always one and the same—of natural and supernatural. **Unreasonable** (*unvernünftig*) and **irrational** (*vernunftlos*) is, on the other hand, that being in whom the faculty (*Vermögen*) of such distinction, the consciousness of that dualism, **does not** occur.

To the countless genres and species of the latter we grant a specific kingdom in our intellect that we call the **animal kingdom**. Over this kingdom, as well as over all the rest of nature, over the **entire kingdom** of living and lifeless beings, rules only the law of the strongest. Violent physical appetite and violent physical pain, the deepest sensual desire and the deepest sensual disgust exert the highest unstoppable and irresistible might on the immense animal kingdom. **Unstoppable** and **irresistible** for in no rational living being do we find a habit or a drive that exceeds the life of its own body or its species. Animal is thoroughly one and the same with its body, **being** (*Sein*) **and consciousness** (*Bewusstseyn*) are utterly equal, so that one might say that its body governs the soul, as well as say that its soul governs the body. Thus animal possesses neither cognition nor conscience, neither knowledge of good or evil, nor **purpose** (*Vorsatz*), nor self-determination. It is uniquely just drive. Since it knows nothing about itself, it knows no **end**. Alike for every being that belongs to the natural kingdom only; it is subjected to and left to its unavoidable destiny.

Above the animal kingdom, as above the entire kingdom of nature which embraces both the animate and inanimate beings, rises the **kingdom of spirits**. The love of beauty and goodness reigns intention and knowledge. Wisdom and **providence** reign over it. This is the highest property of the spirit: that destiny does not prevail over it, but rather, **it** prevails over destiny. The power of this

feature establishes the spirit as creator; its power to create matches its freedom. Within it, the degree of the first is equal to the degree of the latter.

The man who belongs to the natural and animal kingdom **also** belongs with the same certainty to the kingdom of spirit, and he is, according to a well-known expression, a citizen of two different worlds which are marvellously related to each other: one visible and one invisible, one sensible and one suprasensible. Of this double membership he has the greatest consciousness. Consciously, he is hung between the sensible and natural on one hand, and the suprasensible and supernatural on the other. He senses and knows that he is at the same time subjected to and rises above nature, and calls what raises him above nature his most noble and better part; his reason and freedom.

And still, the spirit dwelling inside man who rises above nature is by no means a spirit rejecting or opposing nature, it does not want to tear men apart: this kind of separation would mean annihilation. Everything that exists, except God, belongs to nature, and cannot stand but in connection to it. Hence, everything outside God is **finite**, and nature is the **sum** (*Inbegriff*) **of the finites**. Annihilating nature would entail the annihilation of creation. This foolish desire has been requested by the wise men of the world in the most different ways. Even recently has rung loud the call: man, make up your mind, cease to be yourself and let God exist alone, only then will you be helped and blessed.

Nature is the beginning (*Anfang*) of all things. In the beginning, says the oldest and venerable legend, in the beginning God created heavens and earth, light burst out, elements moved and split up: the universe appeared.

And God spoke to the earth: **Let the earth** put forth grass, herb yielding seed, and trees bearing fruit after its kind, wherein is the seed thereof, upon the earth: and it was so.

And God spoke to water: **let the waters bring forth** under and above the firmament with moving and living creature, and let fowl fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

And again God spoke to the earth: **Let the earth bring forth** living creatures after its kind, cattle, creeping thing, and beasts of the earth after its kind. And it was so.

At the end God spoke neither to the earth, nor to the waters, nor to the whole of nature, but **to himself** God said: let us create man, in **our image**, after our likeness.

And **God himself** created man, and immediately gave him a spirit after his spirit. And so was man. In him is the breath of God the **almighty**, the **creator** of nature, the **origin**, the absolute **independent** and **free**.

Reason is the **consciousness** of spirit. Spirit can exist only immediately from God. Therefore, having reason and knowing God is one thing; just like not knowing of God and being an animal is one thing.

In man can never dwell that ignorance of God as it does in the irrational animal: man **has to** think of God, and if he **denies** him, then he denies also the freedom and spirit in himself. Even so, he cannot completely destroy the cognition of God in his innermost **conscience** (*Gewissen*).

Hence, in the same moment that man recognizes himself as free, i.e. as a being risen above nature by means of reason, as a being that has been burdened to create the good and the beauty after his inborn model, inasmuch as he recognizes himself in such a way, he recognizes also that there has to be a very highest being above nature and himself: **God**! In the event he **does not** recognize himself as a free being, independent from nature through his spirit, then he does not recognize God as well, and so directs his sight towards **mere nature**.

Nature is the power that holds all the parts of the universe set apart and, at the same time, connected. Separation and connection presuppose each other, and **it is the essence of all natural beings to abide halfway**. On account of this come space and time, and that indivisible and universal concatenation – the fundament and the abyss of human science and knowledge with their infinite wealth and infinite emptiness. What happens according to nature happens according to the law of the mutual interrelation of all the parts that mutually presuppose each other, i.e. in an absolute necessary and bare mechanical way[296]. By itself nature exerts neither wisdom nor goodness, but everywhere

[296] The **living** mechanism which develops from the inside is called **organism**. On the concept of mechanism in its broader sense see I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 173.

only violence. That is what is effective without freedom, cognition and will; in that rules only the law of force. Yet where goodness and wisdom are lacking and prevails only the law of force, where — as the old saying goes — there's no dignity, then there's no majesty: «Sine bonitate nulla majestas!».

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Since nature, identical with the universe and manifesting itself in it, is pure beginning and end with neither beginning nor end, it clearly represents in that sense a **negative** infinite, then, it is impossible to get to the bottom of it **from within it** it, or to explain it starting **from** it. It is impossible to investigate and pinpoint its original beginning and its very origination starting from itself, so that its being and essence may reveal themselves without contradiction as an absolutely independent being and essence, as the absolute universal essence, which is in everything and apart from which nothing exists.

Yet as impossible as the first is the demonstration of the opposite, namely nature being a **work** and not **God**: it is **not** creator and creature at the same time, and not in reality the universal essence. The reasoning that starts from the impossibility to found nature on the base of a cause beyond it, which should have created and originated it, was, is, and will be a wrong reasoning, philosophically indefensible.

Among the numerous efforts made to get over this or that impossibility philosophically, the two opposite parties of the naturalists and the theists have always referred in one way or another, and every time with the same degree of reason or unreason, to the one and only principle, the **principle of the unconditioned**.

The fact that any becoming (*Werden*) necessarily presupposes a being (*Seyn*) or an **existing** (*Seyendes*)—which has not yet come to be, that any being subjected to change and time presupposes an eternal not subjected to change, and that any conditioned presupposes an unconditioned **absolute**, is a truth that represents a presupposition of the reason. This is like a positive revelation, accepted by

any philosopher, who splits up at the question: whether this absolute is a **ground** (*Gund*) or a **cause** (*Ursache*). Naturalism asserts that it is a ground and **not** a cause, whereas theism claims it is a **cause** and **not** a **ground**.[297]

The presuppositions of an absolute—or unconditioned—made for every conditioned, together with the realization that the latter cannot be without the former are necessary presuppositions of both every rational consciousness and its innate essential knowledge; and they are also knowledge and presupposition absolutely **inexplicable** (*unbegreiflich*) to human understanding.

The presupposition of the unconditioned is an inexplicable presupposition because it firmly claims a connection of all conditioned to a single unconditioned, and does not reveal the real association (*Zusammenhang*) between the two. To conceive this association, we should go to the bottom of the issue of how the conditioned has risen from the unconditioned, which is immediately presupposed by reason; in other words, how from the absolute one, unchanging and eternal, has risen the manifold, changing, transitory, and temporal: it could rise either once and for all, or continuously, from everlasting to everlasting, out of that unconditioned, thus not as a product but as something which is **one-and-the-same** with that unconditioned.

We are not able to accept either the one or the other: the **being of becoming** or **temporality** (*Zeitlichkeit*) is and remains inexplicable to human understanding, as does the **becoming of becoming,** or the **coming into being** of temporality. Few philosophers made the audacious effort to deny any temporality, any changing and modification, any arising and vanishing, as if they were nothing in the **true effective reality**; and they tried to explain the manifestation of the finite things, of the effective material and **real-objective** world as if it were a mere deceit of a (unspecified) faculty of representation, which would trick itself.[298] This extreme remedy does not fulfill its goal: it does not

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297 About the essential difference between ground (*Grund*) and cause (*Ursache*) please see ***David Hume***, 93, and the Supplement VII of *Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza*, second edition.

298 The essence of this assertion is to refer to Antiquity. Aristotle in the third chapter of the first volume of the Metaphysic mentions that: «if everything rises and perishes from one or many, then the question follows: why does it happen and what is its cause? Matter does not cause its own modification, e.g. wood and bronze are not the cause of their own modification, wood does not become a bed on its own, and neither does bronze become a statue, but there is an external cause for their modification. Looking after that, means looking after a different principle that I call the principle of motion. Those who, from the very first moment, had followed this approach and accepted only **one** matter,

help because it goes beyond its target. Indeed, if it is used to explain nature and the existence of a universe—conditioned in all its parts—through the law of causation and the **temporality** that remedy utterly abolishes and annihilates nature and universe themselves together with the understanding, which refers to them on the basis of the principle of causality. One might conceive that nature is not the mother of all things—that one might believe in, as it were, an infinity that endlessly **produces** in infinite ways—for only the unconditioned exists, the unchanging eternal called God. This lone existing God, reached by means of a destruction of the temporal –i.e. every finite existence and activity– and beheld by means of turning away from the **law of generation**, this God, since he has really created neither a nature nor a world anywhere outside of him, would not absolutely and definitely be the **cause**, but only an infinite ground (*Grund*) and an abyss (*Abgrund*) (totality and All-one). If this God had to be at the same time also an active essence, he would not produce other than an empty time, i.e. a change by all means sterile. That creation would come out as a creation of nothing instead of a creation from nothing, as already shown.[299]

Transformation and time condition each other, as much as cause and effect do. Cause without effect is an absurdity (*Ungedanke*), just as much as cause and effect without time. The act to annihilate time and simultaneously uphold effectiveness and infinite **production** is a mere absurdity. On the contrary, where nothing is created, nothing developed and nothing continuously produced, there cannot be time. And therefore, it would be properly claimed that time—for itself and conceived as a particular essence—is no-thing (*Unding*). A temporal essence exists as much as a world, a nature, and this is what we call will and understanding, purpose and realization, self-satisfaction and remorse, deserved reward and deserved punishment, a human reason and a human conscience.

The ancients asked and the contemporaries repeat: from nature **comes origin, reproduction and decline**—but where does nature come from?

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made the things easier. Among them, few decleared, almost overwhelmed by the investigation, **that this one is unmovable.** They did not deny just the rise and death of the whole nature (as the old opinion says), **but rather they deny all the rest of modifications**; this is their peculiarity». (Fülleborn, *Beyträge*, B. I., 159, 160).

[299] While this doctrine may sound absurd in its last result, it is however imaginable that it has been developed and may obtain some support **even among the most razor-sharp thinkers**. See Beylage C.

Unperturbed, the naturalist answers: you are questioning without thinking, wherefrom the first comes, the uncreated creator, the origin, whence God? He is, and so creation is with him and through him, and we unanimously call it universe; thus the **creator** of the universe is **God**. The existence of the universe appears like a miracle, as **something impossible**, because the human understanding conceives as possible what can or could **become** and **be originated**. Yet, the universe is something necessarily eternal like the creator. And even the sharpest theist would not deny that the latter, i.e. God, has created necessarily from eternity, and so he is urged—not less than the naturalist—to ask how the finite from infinite, the manifold from the one, the temporal changeable from the eternal unchangeable can be generated, or how this can endlessly result from that. No matter which view among the two would be chosen –either assuming with the naturalist that the unconditioned and absolute—presupposed by reason—is just the substratum of the conditioned, the one for all; or, together with the theist, that this unconditioned and absolute is a free, self-conscious cause analogous to a rational will, an highest intelligence purpose directed– in either case, it remains thus far impossible to explain the existence of the universe starting from a First as an **origin**.

Because of the balance kept by naturalism and theism facing science, the latter has legitimately to proclaim its indifference to both. It does not stop doing what is just as soon as the understanding, which belongs to science being its property and creature, reaches self-consciousness and renounces the vain hope of gradually rising together with science—**the echo of an echo**—to omniscience, and so, by means of knowledge, becoming the same with the creator of all things, and even ruling **over** him.

Understanding can with the highest reluctance give up its vain hope of fulfilling science, i.e. of rising **over** reason together with it and through it, and gaining the highest regard. And even after it has given it up, the same vain desire revives unintentionally ever again, in line with the Pauline saying, flesh craves against spirit, and spirit against flesh, and they are against each other. The same happens in man between reason and understanding. And as it happens above, flesh is the **manifest** one, so that its existence and power are undeniable, whereas spirit is the **hidden** one, so its existence

can be well denied, just as much as the fact that it is more powerful. The same happens with reference to what understanding **proves**, as opposite to what reason merely **manifests** as predominant truth. The mediated faculty of knowledge rises over the unmediated, the conditioned cognition over the unconditioned, the lifeless echo over the living voice that announces the spirit, **understanding** over **reason**, just as much as appetites and emotions rise over conscienceness, ruling it, seemingly appearing as the only true power.

This original antagonism grounded in the empirical and rational nature of man, and therefore never wholly eradicated, is the only cause for the two diametrically opposite philosophical systems to arise and, from the early times, so many and different systems to be given. For the same reason, all the differences can be brought down to one major difference: that those systems were/are either **theistic** or **anti-theistic**; or, as Kant would rather express, those that tend to **Platonism** and those that tend to **Epicureanism**.

One becomes either a naturalist or a theist after subjugating either reason to understanding, or understanding to reason. Or—which is the same—when one accepts or denies out of the existence of the necessity **in nature** the existence of freedom **above nature**.

Reason claims the existence of freedom and yet does not deny the existence of necessity and its boundless power **in the entire field of the not-rational** (*vernunftlos*) **nature**. On the other hand, understanding utterly denies the existence of freedom because it arises from the law of causality, regarded as the very highest law and uppermost principle (which is the **universal law**, according to which any effect has to have a cause as much as any cause has to necessarily have an effect). The law of causality turns into the following proposition: **nothing is absolute, there is not a very highest, uppermost and first, there is neither a? commencement nor an? absolute beginning**.

Nevertheless, understanding cannot back out of the idea of the unconditioned which is instilled by reason and is the necessary presupposition for every conditioned; it cannot do it lest it loses the idea of causality with it. Cause, conceived as a mere concept of the understanding, is meaningless, fraught with contradiction; it can receive its content, truth, and meaning only from reason, from the

sentiment (*Gefühl*) that I am, I act, create and produce. Human understanding lies entirely in this **sentiment** which is **reason**; the former is based on the latter and presupposes it necessarily as something higher.

Apparently, understanding can escape from this confusion only by **refusing** the objective validity of the idea of the unconditioned and **acknowledging** a mere subjective one. Everything in the human faculty of knowledge is wholly turned upside down by means of this artificial transformation of the unconditioned, from a **real** to a mere **ideal**. Reason is brought to understanding, and the philosophy of the absolute nothing gets started. Therefore, if there is nothing unconditionally true, then there is nothing in general, thus together with the essence ceases also truth.

Understanding escapes this issue thanks to another transformation that immediately follows the first, namely: the subjective turning into the objective. An hallucination, a ghost of the unconditioned, that replaces the true unconditioned, in the same way the true took the place of poetry (*Gedicht*), now poetry (*Gedicht*) takes the place of the true. This hallucination, this ghost, this idol that understanding shapes after denying the superior authority of reason, which is lowered to a mere faculty of phantasy (*Dichtungsvermögen*) under the understanding's control and authority, this idol, which is eager to rise above itself toward the level of reason, invoking and deifying it—is called **totality**, and actually is that ever broader **universality** which is shaped in the understanding by means of concept and word, and is nothing outside the understanding: neither as one, nor as many, nor as all.

Also in the understanding, the universal takes shape after the singular, concept after perception[300]. Yet right after the rise of the concept, this latter rises above perception and looks at whatever is considered under itself—i.e. the infinity of different singulars—as though they sprung from itself, and considers itself and its son, the word, as the ground and the cause of the essence.

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[300] The one who denies that, they confuse the undetermined with the universal. This happened and still happens even to the sharpest thinkers. The bare **undifferentiated** is thoroughly different from the gathering under a cogent feature. The conscious indifference under one concept of the unconscious mixes in a cloudy representation. This indifference is similar to the one Spinoza spoke of: **between the being certain and the mere not questioning**.

It is easy to unveil the deception, how it grows and succeeds!

First comes the excitement of senses. A cloudy flow of multifarious sensations inundates the mind, wobbling and roaring. Then, gradually, what was liquid solidifies, we make distinctions, we judge, conceive, count and name. Here comes understanding, a world is brought into existence.

But this world, which is arised by dividing and connecting, separating and sorting, by **forming concepts**, vanishes at the end in the **ideal** of an ultimate concept that eradicates and devours every manifold. What remains is thought (*Denken*) as thought, facing the nothing as nothing. With understanding, and due to it, man falls back to chaos and shapelessness, and only this difference is revealed: the earlier was only a loaded chaos, the subsequent is an empty chaos.

The empty chaos is shapeless, it is **absolutely undetermined** (Plato and the Pythagoreans named it the Infinite), it is the unconditioned, the absolute of the **understanding**; that phantasm which the understanding posits above the absolute of reason, assuming to take it as the essence of all essences, the truly objective **All and One**.

If the philosophizing understanding, always rising towards furtherer concepts, was really capable of reaching, at the end, that **ideal concept** which it runs after, that which devours and destroys all the manifold, it would only find the beginning of all things together with their **end.**

We say **their beginning together with their end**, since the understanding, **by way of abstraction**, can climb up from the determined into the absolutely undetermined, and, **by way of reflection**, can easily climb down (the other way around) from the absolutely undetermined to the determined. At its behest, every thing can rise from the ashes and return from the no-thing (*Unding*). The understanding can regenerate them back from the nothing, just as it was able to **annihilate** them. Hence, the identity of essence and not-essence can be brought to light.

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I am who I am. This dictum founds everything. Its echo in the human soul is the revelation of God: «**made in His image, in the likeness of who is**». By creating man God theomorphized him; therefore man necessarily anthropomorphizes. What makes man a man, i.e. an **image of God**, is **reason** which begins with: I am, **in the beginning was the Word**; where this inner **word**—**which expresses always the same**—resounds: here is reason, person, and freedom. Reason without personality is an absurdity; the same absurdity that is **fundamental matter** or **original ground** that is all and not one, or one and none, or perfection and imperfection, the absolute undetermined. And those who do not want to know anything of the true God call that **God**, and yet they shy away from denying him with their lips.[301]

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I am who I am, who I was and who I will be. Past, present and future are united in the sentiment (*Gefühl*) of the indivisible self-being and being in itself. This is the consciousness of the spirit, this is «**the seal of the Eternal placed in us**.»

«Nature gave even to animals some notions of mathematics and physics with unequalled perfection. But millennium afterwards, the possibility to see **Jamshid** offering order and right to the Iranians in the holy hall of the royal castle, or, in our time, to listen to **Livy**, or to learn of the death of **Leonidas**, or to come to know of **Tell** setting free his people: this is the man, and only man can do it.»[302]

Not what you see; (even animal observes),

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[301] «**Without world, there is no God**; says the formula, with which Naturalism expresses in the easiest and clearest way. Every religion has yet always turn the sentence over and stated: **without God, there is no World**. Faith in God is given to us before every world view (*Weltanschauung*); **with our I is already posited an original-I** (***Ur-Ich***). Deep inside the mind we see the original image (*Urbild*) of life, and we see it reverberating through the veiled countenance of Nature, and thus we astonish, love and worship: and that is religion, not a chemical identity process whereby we throw ourselves and nature in a mix of a chaotic mass, giving our life up, together with that of nature and God.» (See Jenaische Allgemeine Lit. Zeitung, 1807, no. 131).

[302] See Joh. Müller's Vorrede zu Herders Denkmal der Vorwelt.

Not what you hear; (even animals perceive),

Not what you learn; (even the raven learns),

What you understand and conceive; the power,

That in you works, the inner prophetesse;

Who from the old world the future world makes;

The sorter who, untangling the skein, weaves with the yarn of nature

the beautiful tapestry within and without you;

That is what you, your **Self,** are; and the divinity is like you.

«Divinty» Yes! Imagine

the chaos of all beings without sense and spirit,

without anything pervading it all,

governs itself and everything; imagine

the great nonsense of this most ingenious

nature, and plunge yourself insanely into

the desolate chaos which doesn't know itself:

then **you** would be a **Self**, even if nothing is.

Back to you! In your innermost

Consciousness lives a talking proof

Of the supreme **consciousness of the whole**. – Be a beast,

Lose **yourself**, but will you be surprised, oh you fool,

To have lost along with yourself the Goddess too?

«The essence of harmony» – An empty word,

with no listener. You, listen to it, deep

in your heart, and your heart names

out loud in the deepest silence

the Lord of worlds, the **highest Self**, the sense

and spirit, the essence of all essences, God»[303].

If we represent God with a naïve representation—not in a sublime way, but anthropomorphized—so that a God appears locked in a bodily shape, as man is: a God with hands and feet, in need of eyes in order to see, ears to hear, sensory (*sinnend*) and reflective (*nachsinned*) understanding to know and will, then reason properly rises up against such a foolish representation.

But it should be more deeply outraged if you, by divinizing nature, present a God who creates eyes but does not see, generates ears but does not hear, brings into being the understanding and does not perceive, know or will; and who is not. Do say it: there is no God! But do not say and teach that darkness is light, that a rational being is a not divine essence, that the coral that gives rise to islands in the sea is more similar to God than man who thinks, who strives for virtue and holiness, and who manifests love, wisdom the beautiful and good. Do not say: the original and universal essence comes out in man **transfigured and with no harm**; because such an anthropomorphism would only in appearance and deceptively rise above the old fetishism, the worship of plants, animals, the Lingam or Moloch.

What is to honour in man if not the fact that he is able to think what is higher than his reason, more magnificent than the universe: the **spirit**, which is the only absolute independent and the source of every truth, and without which no truth is possible?

Therefore, we acknowledge that anthropomorphism is inseparably tied to the belief according to which man carries in himself the image of God, and assert that for except this anthropomorphism—always called theism—there is only atheism or **fetishism**.

303 See J.G.Herder, *Zerstörte Blätter*, VI, 78.

In order to eradicate the idolatrous worship of nature from his people, one of the greatest legislators and heros of antiquity, **Moses**, stayed for forty years in the desert. After centuries it was possible for the Jewish people to turn into the **Christian** people[304].

These days, two men very different from one another and yet equally peculiar, Lavater and J.G. Hamann recollected those words of Johan: «Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father». It has been generally proclaimed that they were fanatics, **visionaries engaged in the idolatry of a man**, filled with ignorance, superstition and intolerance.

One believes in God not for the sake of Nature that hides Him, but rather for the sake of the supernatural in man that is what reveals and proves Him: is it really ignorance and fanaticism that which is to confess?

Nature hides God because it reveals everywhere only fate, an unbreakable chain of mere effective causes with no beginning and end, and leaves out with the same necessity both providence and chance. It is absolutely impossible to find in it and to have from it an independent activity, a free original beginning. Nature works without will and invokes neither the good nor the beautiful; it does not create, yet perpetually transforms unintentionally and unconsciously out of its dark abyss only itself, fostering with the same restless zeal both decline and growth, life and death—unable to produce what comes only from God and presupposes freedom: virtue and immortality.

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304 «It is unspeakable, says Herder, what kind of treasure of knowledge and morality were to refer for human race to the concept of the unity of God. Human race turned away from superstition, and therefore also idolatry, vice and horror of privileged and divine disorder, and thus got used to see everywhere the unity of aims of the things, and gradually also the natural laws of wisdom, love and goodness, and to bring unity in every manifold, order in disorder, light in darkness. While the world through the concept of one creator turned to one world (κόσμος), turned its image (*Abglanz*) too, the mind of men, which learned wisdom, order and beauty. Whatever doctrine or poetry of earth had contributed to that, it had resulted in useful things. The Hebraic doctrine did that excellently. It had been the oldest dam against idolatry that we know. It cast the first beautiful ray of the light of unity and order into the chaos of creation—gradually becoming due to its loftiness and truth, its simplicity and wisdom, the leader of the world». (J.G. Herder, *Geist der Ebräischen Poesie*, I ed., first part, pp. 51-52, in *Sämmtliche Werke*, part I, pp. 59 and 60).
That a man like Christ only among Jewish people could have risen, it has been already noticed several times, and it cannot be denied by any historian of philosophy.
About Christianity as historical event, its development from Judaism, its spirit, its influence as religion over mankind, and finally the relation of this religion to philosophy, as well as the influence of the latter over the first, one can find an highly instructive treatise in the VII volume of Tennemann's *Geschichte der Philosophie* (Haupt 5. Abschnitt 1).
Also Joh. Müller in the sixth chapter of the ninth book of his *Allgemeiner Gschichte* outstandingly speaks about the same topic.

Man reveals God, while he rises above nature through spirit and, thanks to this spirit, sets itself against nature as an independent and undefeatable power: fighting, overpowering, and dominating it.

When man vividly believes in this power that lives in him and is superior to Nature, then he believes in God: he feels Him and experiences Him. When he does not believe in this power in him, then he does not believe in God either, and sees and experiences everywhere only Nature, necessity, and fate.

If Nature alone existed, then it would be the **almighty**, and the holy would be nowhere. Then **Tiberius** and **Nero**, **Ezzelino** and **Borgia** would be possible, but **Socrates** and **Christ would not**.

It is then true that the **holiness** testifies to itself; the one who recognizes it, also recognizes the Father; and the one who believes in it, does not really believe in it, but **in the one that it has come from**.

Christianity, **conceived in this purity**, is the only religion. Apart from it there is only atheism and idolatry.

When the fourth son of the Maccabees cheerfully dies, as his brothers, after having endured unperturbed the dreadful martyrdom, utter these words: **it is beautiful to lose all hope in men and entrusting oneself only to God**. He says those sublime words that every human heart repeats, testifying that only one God exists, and one spirit, invincible against sin and death, from God into human breast.

Job, proving his virtue and justifying the promise made by the Creator, sat on his heap of ashes as it were God's glory and pride. God and his heavenly army looked at him, while he endured his misfortune. –He won, and his victory is the triumph over the stars. Be that history or poetry, the one who wrote that, was a seer of God.[305]

[305] See Herder von Geist der Ebräischen Poesie. Vol. 1, 143 erste Ausg. Sämmtlichen Werke Th I. s. 140.

And now, the **one**, «the purest among the mighty, the mightiest among the pure, who with his pierced hand unhinged the realms and made overflow the stream of centuries, goes forth to rule history! »[306] – Who might confess that He was and at the same time say: there is no God, providence, love which rules over the lightless fate, over blind destiny.

Nonetheless – «**I keep going straight forward, He is not there; I turn back, and I do not feel Him!**» Christ himself on the cross burst into the shaking shout: «**My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?**» And expired with the words: «**into thy hands I commend my spirit!**» Thus spoke the mightiest among the pure, the purest among the mighty. This war and this victory is Christianity. And the author of the present writing professes his faith in it, and ends with this profession his work.

[306] Friedriech Richter, Ueber den Gott in der Geschichte und im Leben.

Appendix A

As regards the system of absolute identity, Spinoza was not simply its forerunner but its maker and first teacher. The true great philosophical act of this solitary and profound thinker, that he made for the first time in history and which has not been properly presented yet, consists in *pure distinction* (*Trennung*) without *separation* (*Scheidung*) between thinking substance and extended substance. Since his second definition reads as follows, *at corpus non terminatur cogitatione, nec cogitatio corpore*, he creatively founded his new system which—de facto and in truth—is the same as the more recent system of objectivity-subjectivity, or of the absolute identity between being and consciousness.

Spinoza posited the twofold proposition as self-evident and foundational truth—for it does not need any proof—that the thinking being cannot derive from the extended being as a consequence, modification, or effect nor—vice-versa—the extended being form the thinking being. That is: neither matter can generate spirit, nor spirit matter. Necessarily and from eternity—he inferred—are both united in the only indivisible substance: they both are consubstantial and they relate to each other like being with consciousness.

Spirit and body do not determine each other, they do not rule over or subject each other; they both, in the strictest sense, constitute together one being: spirit is nothing different and nothing more than the soul of a body, it is "the immediate concept of a single thing really present, and it is nothing beyond that. It is therefore impossible that perfection, excellence, and power of the soul are different than perfection, excellence, and power of the body, etc."[307]

Spinoza's extended being cannot be considered a matter to which the thinking being gives shape, as it happens instead in Plato, for whom the *soul* is cause and universal first principle. For Spinoza the extended being is *everything that is*, *exists*, *and acts objectively* (according to his

[307] "Objectum ideae humanam mentem constituentis est corpus sive certus extensionis modus actu existens et nihil aliud." "The object of the idea constituting the human mind is the body, in other words a certain mode of extension which actually exists, and nothing else." *Ethica*, Pars II, Prop 13.

lexicon, *formally*), it is true reality; the thinking being, instead, is the being that produces representations compliant with the first. Hence, though he clearly distinguishes the first from the latter, his *essentia objectiva* from his *essentia formalis*, spiritual being form corporeal being, his doctrine is indeed wholly materialistic because the thinking being, notwithstanding its independence from the extended being, has not object of representation and thought other than the extended being.[308]

In order that this system of absolute objectivity be transformed into a system of absolute subjectivity, extended being had first to be deprived of substantiality. Malebranche, Leibniz and Berkeley tried to demonstrate the non-substantiality of extended being. The thinking being remained the only substantial being, but only until an even more profound thinker arrived and did in relation to the thinking being what his predecessors had done with regard to the extended being. He demonstrated that even the substantiality of the thinking being was just a phenomenon. The *cogito*, conceived as a transformed predicate, could not pronounce his *ergo* anymore: it lost its *sum* and, with it, it lost reality in general.

Therefore, our Kant intentionally founded a second Spinozism, which I elsewhere defined *transfigured*.[309] From this point of view, one could discern the old system—let us call it material-*idealist*—from the new one—let us call it ideal-*materialism*. Yet, the same acute author of the new system of identity showed that, in the new system, is the same to start from the object or from the subject as one: assuming that one philosophizes correctly, they will arrive to the same conclusion and to the *whole truth* from both starting-points. In his own way, this is precisely what Spinoza has already done; and in no respect this great man appears to be more profound, more sublime, and

[308] Mens se ipsam non cognoscit nisi quatenus corporis affectionum ideas percipit. *Ethica*, Pars II, Prop 23.
[309] Cf. *Letter to Fichte* (1799). It has been briefly expounded how speculative materialism, by developing its own metaphysics, must by itself turn into idealism; it has been shown how these two main routes of philosophy—the effort to explain everything on the basis of a matter that self-defines independently or exclusively depending on a thinking essence that determines itself autonomously—are not mutually exclusive, but slowly draw near each other till they wholly join and lead to the same goal. I merely showed that very little was missing in Spinoza for the transformation, later undertaken by materialism to turn into idealism, to be accomplished as his substance—which is the very same fundament of both the extended being and thinking being—, this *one* matter of two completely different being, does not mean but the same absolute identity of subject and object, being and consciousness, body and spirit.

more kind than where he shows, from the bottom of his consciousness, what certainty is and how our soul can partake in it.[310] Here he not only refers to Plato, the master of innate ideas and of its objective validity, but he also joins forces with him extraordinarily; and here one finds—under similar or different names—what modern Spinozism calls *intellectual intuition of the absolute*, which is a term that in my opinion is not senseless or to reject.[311] We need a specific term to define the kind of consciousness *in* which the true, the good and the beautiful are present in themselves, manifesting something that is overabundant, first and supreme which cannot appear in phenomena; *with* this consciousness the *ideas*, *the highest statements* of reason, pass on the understanding like *immediate* knowledges that are not initially mediated through the senses so that the feeling of truth and certainty undeniably connects to these knowledges. This feeling associates with sensible intuitions and, by means of those intuitions, the entire human mind indescribably participates in the perfect certainty of the true.

In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant says (Introduction, p. XVIII): "the concept of nature can well *represent* its objects in intuition, but not as things in themselves; the concept of freedom can instead *represent* its *object* as thing in itself, but not in intuition". I ask myself if an objective *representation* without *intuition* cannot be called *intellectual* intuition, that is, if an objective representation without something analog to intuition—a *perception*—is thinkable.

No doubt if the true, good, and beautiful are merely ideas invented out of necessity, if they are concepts of the understanding extended without necessity or objective validity, mere *categories of despair*, then an intellectual intuition that confirms them is absurd and superfluous for, in all truth, they must not be confirmed but only explained and made comprehensible like heuristic *inventions*.

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310 Cf. *De intellectus emendatione, et de via, qua optime in veram rerum cognitionem dirigitur. opp. posth*., pp. 357-392. Please see in *Ethica* those passages in which are treated the three kinds of knowledge, the self-validating truth, and the perfect certainty.

311 Yet not according to the judgment of the profound Fries. Cf. Neue Kritik der Vernunft, I part, p. 194, § 53.

Following a bluntly Platonic manner, I attribute receptivity and spontaneity to the reason of any created being, for reason is the faculty of perceiving and apprehending; finding and holding that together constitute the original source of rational truth.[312] In any finite or sensory being (any finite being is, in fact, necessarily a sensory being) reason is nothing but the sense of the supersensible. As much the corporeal sense is absolutely positive and uniquely reveals—so acts the spiritual sense—the reason. So, the understanding philosophizes only by moving between sensory and supersensible perception and relating to each equally. By ignoring this twofold relationship and by trusting the supersensible exclusively, some slandered the understanding as if it were applicable only to sensory experience. Others, by failing to recognize the twofold relationship and trusting the sensory exclusively, rose up against reason and immediately interpreted its bright revelations as pure inventions. Both positions are to be rejected. Nevertheless, it is difficult to back out of the second mistake if one rejects intellectual intuition only on the basis that it cannot actually be translated into a sensory, material intuition, that is, only because reason communicates with the understanding only by means of *invisible visions*—the seeing of the forethought—that we call *feelings* in the most noble sense.

One of the most remarkable thinkers of the Middle Age, Hugh de Saint-Victor, stated that human reason has no comprehension of God and professes only *faith*, which stands between opinion and knowledge. In fact, he claimed that God cannot be thought in its essence, not even via analogy, for it is higher than everything we know, beyond bodies and spirit, and man can think only what is *relative*. Therefore, since faith cannot be perceived like an any other external thing or like the soul itself, it represents the only ground of the belief in the existence of God. But he also adds that one cannot assume a more certain fundament for believing than *that of believing in what reason cannot understand*: "How could all the saint and just people disregard this present life so unanimously for their aspiration to eternal life, *if they did not have of the truth of eternal life a*

[312] Cf. *Republic*, VII, X, VI.

presentiment that surpasses our comprehension"? Excellent idea, says Tennemann, but it nears mysticism.[313]

And what superior and profound idea, intellectual or moral, will not be mystical?

Mystical, absolutely mysterious, is the beginning of our knowledge, incomprehensible presupposition of an original Being which conceives in itself and generates outside itself all true, good and beautiful. "Only with the presupposition of such a hidden principle we are in fact capable of the concept of truth". We call *reason* the *faculty* of such presupposition.

But how reason grasps such *presupposition* which first gives the concept of truth, since in it "remains nothing but the concept of nothingness as its own pure product, once through reflection it rises over every sensible intuition"?

The answer is: exactly for this reason it rises over there!

"Since it is impossible that reason can consider the pure nothingness that remains at the end of the process of abstraction, as if it were the fundament and the beginning of everything and of itself, as if it were the substratum of being, the alpha and omega, then reason—out of necessity—posits the opposite of nothingness in the place of nothingness, the *One that is and acts unconditionally, the Absolute, God.*"

Or one says: "The source of such a presupposition is the unfathomable *desire* that goes beyond any subjective and objective nature, any concept, intuition and feeling with which our nature, *in the highest sense of the term*, holds onto *something very high*, something simply *incomparable*. Thanks to this desire, reason has in front of itself *ideally* the Absolute; reason *searches* for it, *posits* it like an object, but reason does not know it like a really existing entity, present outside reason, as if it were independent from reason's representation."

But how it is possible a desire, a research, and an aspiration without even an obscure representation of the *object* that one desires, searches for, and aspires to? From the painful feeling

[313] Cf. *Geschichte der Philosophie*, Part VIII, pp. 206-212.

of hunger, says Plato, never originates the pleasurable representation of satiety or of what gives it, food. The need as such does not reveal its remedy: only experience discovers it. But experience itself becomes possible only on the basis of a soul provided with an *original* foresight, fit for *divine* precognitions.[314]

If the presupposition of the Absolute—the concept of Absolute as we defined it earlier—is just a necessary lie with which reason deceives itself, then reason is *a deceiver all along*, for it starts with that presupposition or, better, *being one with it*.

Yet, if reason is not a deceiver, then it does not receive the concept of Absolute from itself, but it *comes* from it and exists by means of it: the concept of absolute is *given* to reason, and reason is given to itself thanks to that concept. Reason trusts unconditionally the reality of this concept as much as it trusts itself. The *method* of the confirmation of *such reality to reason* is not the same as the revelation to the *understanding*; just *the confidence of reason* reflects itself in the understanding and an invincible feeling takes the place of intuition.

If one tries to turn that feeling, these *invisible visions*, the seeing of forethought, into visible representations, or to turn the first-hand certainty that we—for lack of better expression—call *faith* into a second-hand certainty, the unconditional *certainty* into a conditional one, then in the first case appears enthusiasm, while in the second appears empty formalism, an impossible philosophy *of pure logic*.

I believe that the expressions of the author of the excellent essay *Ideal-Object of Rational Desire* must be interpreted in this way; earlier we have drawn from that essay few excerpts for our considerations. They state: "human understanding that searches for the absolute holds—from the speculative and practical point of view—*first and foremost* nothing but a purely rational desire which is identical to reason itself and disdains any different fundament".[315] Certainly, this writer—

[314] See the profound analysis and the unequalled detailed study of such an important truth in the *Philebus*.
[315] *Neues Museum der Phil. u. Lit.*, I, folder 2, p.37.

who is as rich of spirit as much he is acute— did not simply want to repeat, though with different terms, Kant's anti-platonic doctrine about the idea of the absolute!

With regard to the Kantian doctrine of the absolute, and of ideas in general, another excellent author properly points out: "Kant's speculative reason is nothing but the simple faculty of inference, the faculty of reflection. In Kant the *immediate knowledge of reason* is always presupposed *covertly*, never *clearly*. As a consequence, even his practical reason and its faith, that he conceived even only as a fact, remained something very obscure as soon as one asked how we got to them. Even in this case, he *immediately* saw what pertains to the faculty of reflection only."

"The distinction—goes on the same profound author—according to which *any knowledge of ours is either intuition or concept* is correct only as long as it is taken as an immediate object of internal perception. We become *conscious* of our knowledges only as intuitions or through concepts. Yet, if we do not look at this simple condition of re-becoming aware of our knowledges in us, but rather we look at their *immediate presence in our mind*, the distinction is thus incomplete: beside clear *representations* of intuitions and concepts are obscure ones, *and to them primarily belongs the immediate, inexpressible knowledge of reason*."[316]

As the light breaks through the darkness, it may appear that the first has merely originated from the second, so reflection—not supported by a higher wisdom—will fancy like this.

Look, First of all Chawos came into being...
From Chawos were born Erebos and black Night.
From Night, again, were born Aether and Day, whom she
conceived and bore after mingling with Erebos.[317]

[316] Cf. Fries, *Neue Kritik der Vernuft*, I, pp. 204-206.
[317] Hesiod, *Theogony*, 114-125.

This ancient doctrine is still the doctrine of the prized wise. Believing in providence appears to them as a baby thing, because they can conceive the creative freedom only like *blind chance*, and reason only like *necessity* that intuits itself, being transparent to itself.

Remember the dwellers of the cave, enchained, in the VII book of Plato's *Republic*, their laughing at those who come back from the contemplation of highest things *being blinded by the light*; remember their worrying of their eyes getting injured and losing the *clarity of knowledge* that they bear: that who would try to unchain them and lead them outside, to the light that quells the vision of the *real*, should be seized and killed.

Our firm belief is as follows:

The "the proper, immediate, inexpressible knowledges of *reason* that come to the *understanding* just as *obscure representations*" are, *in themselves*, *light of superior knowledge*, of which, with Plato, Spinoza states: it reveals both itself and darkness.

"In the knowable world—says Plato—the outer and difficult-to-see point is the idea of good; but when you saw it, it must be regarded as the cause of everything is right and beautiful; cause that in the visible world generates both the light and the sun, source of light, while in the intelligible world it lavishes, like a sovereign, truth and intellect. And those who want to behave wisely in public or private must see it." (*Republic*, VII, 517 c).

Appendix B

Plato states: ″Some—famous for their depth of spirit—maintain that everything that exists, existed, and will exist is a product of either *nature*, or *art*, or *chance*. They claim that the greatest and most beautiful things come from nature and chance, while the least relevant come from art which, taking from the nature´s hands the first and foremost works, processes them in different ways to mold and fabricate any objects of minor relevance that, for this reason, are called *artificial*. Fire, water, earth, air—they say—exist because of *nature* and *chance*, they are not products of *art*… From the combination of forces, *that chance had to combine according to the laws of necessity*, sprang everything we see: the sky with its stars, animals and plants, together with the changing of seasons; all without the intervention of an intellect, without God, without art; everything has occurred—they claim—only because of *nature* and *chance*. Subsequently, from these two first and original principles flowed art, which is an invention of the mortals and is itself mortal. It cannot produce true beings through imitation, but just umbral images which hardly bear bits of truth. In cases where art produces something more substantial, it has received help from nature and acts according to its forces. Examples are medicine, agriculture and gymnastic. In some sense also politics, but this receives less from nature and all from art, which is why the whole legislation lacks a true ground.

″The gods—those men distinctly claim—are products of art as much as the laws, and they are not the same in every place, but they vary between different peoples according to the agreement between the lawmakers of each nation.

Thus, the good is also different whether defined by nature or law; as regards the just, nature has absolutely no conception, but men call just what laws—in different and often variable ways—require defining as such, without nature having any say‶ (*Laws*, L, 888e-890a).[318]

[318] Jacobi is not loyal to Plato's text.

Against this system—destructive of all morality—Plato proves that we need to admit necessarily not blind causality—as absolutely first principle from which everything else has originated—like those wise men claim, but a causality according to representations, a rational *will* and a *teleologically oriented intellect*; therefore, art is older than nature.

If his proofs appear sound to a rigorous criticism, his remarks at least counterbalance the opposing ones. The mind chooses between naturalism and theism with the same freedom involved in choosing between morality and wellbeing. Faith in God is not a science, it is a virtue.

Appendix C

Usually rational knowledge is deemed justified knowledge. But we know on the basis of grounds only when the axiom, the whole is necessarily equal to the sum of its parts, suits singular cases.

Justified knowledge is not possible where this axiom is not applied. In fact, under no circumstances justified knowledge is—and can ever be—different than the knowledge that the parts mutually derive from the whole that they together constitute; and, on the other hand, that the whole draws from its parts, inasmuch as the parts necessarily belong to the whole, and *in it* they belong *mutually*. I demonstrate by indicating the place or location that a determinate part necessarily occupies in a defined whole. What is not a part of a whole, it is neither demonstrable nor deducible. If something is *included, we affirm it*, if it is *excluded, we negate it*.

Paying no attention to the fact that by *fundaments* [or reasons] we mean nothing but the set, the totality of determinations of an object, has led philosophy to countless mistakes.

Now, not only the parts, or determinations, or predicates taken together, are the *same* as the whole that unites them—making with it, or the object, one sole thing—and for this reason they necessarily present themselves as they exist together with it; therefore, neither the whole can *objectively* exist before the parts, nor the parts—*as parts of this whole*—can exist before it. In other terms, the interpolation of time between fundament and consequence, between subject and predicate, is impossible.

With the interpolation of time, the concepts of fundament and consequence turn into those of *cause* and *effect*. Although, we know in which way *effect* results from *cause* and how they connect necessarily, only if, by abstracting from the dimension of time that separates them, we turn cause into fundament (subject) and the effect into mere consequence (predicate), thus having them coincide (cause and effect). In this manner we explain both individual and complex consequences of human actions under the firm constitution of human mind, human unchangeable character.

Where it is not possible to proceed in this way—removing time from explanation—we do not acquire any vision but, like animals, we just earn with experience only the *expectation of similar cases*.

This truth, long expounded by David Hume, led our Kant—by his own admission—to his system of subjectivity. But that system—Kantian criticism or *transcendental idealism*—instead of revealing the mistake in exchanging and mixing the concept of ground with the concept of cause, it has justified it, therefore systematically leading to the affirmation—discussed in our work—*that in reality nothing occurs*.

Long before the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and without D. Hume, the author of these considerations met, along his path and in a slight different form, the criticism to the reality of the concept of cause first presented in the *Letters Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza*, and discussed in detail in the dialogue *Idealism and Realism*. I refer to this discussion that reports the abovementioned exchange and mix of the different concepts of fundament and cause. I only add what follows.

Definitely, the concept of fundament, of *the one and whole*, is the supreme concept of the *understanding*. But the supreme concept of *reason*, which is one with it, is the concept of *cause* of what exists in itself and produces exclusively by itself, of what creates without being created, in one word, of the absolutely unconditioned.

The understanding negates the cause, which is higher than the ground and wholly different because, according to Kant's correct remark (Preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 20), it cannot conceive the unconditioned other than as contradiction. Reason, on the other hand, affirms the cause, which is higher than the fundament and wholly different, because life, movement and being are only by means of the cause.

Plato taught the one that cannot differentiate, on the one hand the *unity* variously generated by the understanding—by means of idea and word, multiplicity and diversity, *the not-one*—and, on the other hand the *one* which, revealing itself immediately to reason, to the *consciousness of the*

spirit, to the *soul*, is the *same one* (*to en auto*), that one places the word necessarily before the being, both image and deceptive appearance of image before the model, so that this one does not see the true and the essential—what is equal only to itself—anymore; and the same one insists on doing everything with *words*, like a charmer, charming themselves as well. In all truth, with the fundament of the discourse, that one loses the discourse itself because what he produces is just empty noise, deceit and lie.[319]

When Plato stated that individual realities presuppose kinds as their cause, and these presuppose types, was not following a logical deceit—as Kant believed, and as it has often been claimed. His kinds and types are clearly not pre logical or nominal entities, they are not mere concepts that, derived from preexistent realities, draw their own truth from those realities so that they would be nothing without them. For Plato, his kinds—the *ideas*—exist truly and really *before* types and individual things, and they only make the latter possible in the stricter sense. This holds as much as the idea of a first creator and the model created by him, who come—according to this conception—before the innumerable reproductions that conform to intention and rule of the model; so that the following *multiplicity* is made possible only by the preceding *one* from which it is generated. But the *one*, from which the multiplicity derives, is not *multiplied* because of it, but it remains the same *one* eternally, and it cannot possibly multiply.

As multiplicity, and *from* multiplicity, or *plurality*, nothing comes to light; the one only comes from the one. We do not design watches, boats, looms, or languages but: *one* watch or *that* watch, *one* boat or *that* boat, *one* language or *this* language.

We cannot say and will never say of any single or particular thing among the many of these types—watch, boat, language—that it is *the* Watch, *the* Boat, *the* Language. Therefore, we are allowed to speak only of the one cause—be it type, kind, law, idea or soul—from which emerged and keep emerging multiplicity and diversity.

[319] Cf. Plato, *Sophist*, and the conclusion of the *Cratylus*, and *Theaetetus*.

What is one in its essence cannot vanish in what is for its essence the *non-one*, in a lifeless multiple, and at the same time being the same one that produces in it and from it something that is a true one which, as such, consists in itself. The former cannot but move, necessitate, and connect the latter's parts so that it makes the creative spirit known to a spirit like his. At this point the shapeless earns a form, but only exteriorly; it is foreign to it, and imposed. It is not an internal form, existing for itself, that simply manifests in exterior what is interior, a form that is able to love and to maintain itself. Of course, in each and every of these forms reveals itself a *soul* that is exterior to them. They announce an *intention*, therefore a *spirit*, that does not dwell in them. Their *cause*, their *spirit*, knows about them before they existed; but they do not know about themselves once they come to light. Their creator loved its purpose in them, its intention, and they sprang from this love. But they do not love themselves, they do not tend to preservation but, like any of their parts, they incessantly lean back to the non-one, where they again strive for dissolution.

Thus the thought produced by a thinking being can derive from it, from the thinking being, and manifests itself like a plastic form in the shapeless, in the non-thinking, in the lifeless, in what is essentially *non-one*; it can produce real forms in it and from it, *copies* of the immanent original one. Nevertheless, the thinking being cannot *animate* these copies if it is itself something created, derived from a higher being: only God, the supreme being, can call to life a being that *exists in itself*. Thus, it is impossible that a spirit exists while knowing nothing about *Him*, which is the *kind* of its type, the absolute one, the only to exists in itself in the perfect way, the cause, the beginning *sic at simpliciter, and in the highest sense possible*.

Plato, as dualist, always takes position against the sophists, as consistent dualists. He shows that for those who claim that *only the one exists* a closer look would reveal that even that one dissolves leaving no being or truth. Now, only assuming that, the sophist becomes a strict antidualist or master of unitotality. He “differentiated all from all, and therefore abolished any

difference". He is left with mere "names of names, shadow images in form of words": the one and the non-one, all and nothingness.[320]

Plato openly admits that it is impossible to contest the resolved sophist, because the true, good and beautiful in itself—rejected by the former—can only be showed and not demonstrated. But they can be showed only to those who turn voluntarily, *with their entire being*, towards the only place where all this can be seen. [321] On the contrary, the nothingness of sensible world manifests itself only to the one who put effort in grasping the being in it. The sophist—who turns only to that other side—correctly concludes that being is nothing but an eternal becoming, and that in it there is nothing fundamentally true or false, nor anything just, good, beautiful, or unjust, repulsive, or evil.

Only those who looked beyond, away from what comes into the world or dies, find the true, good and beautiful in themselves on this side; and those recognize that the universe exists by means of the good that—higher than the things—produces not only the knowledge of the true, but also the true itself, as much as the sun not only gives light and visibility to the visible but also gives life; they recognize that this universe is a creation, the work of a god.[322]

In this way the Platonic doctrine is no as far from materialism as from idealism: it affirms the reality of the sensible world, its objectivity, the reality of the supreme cause, the truth of the ideas of good and beautiful, and distinguishes the supernatural from the natural, what has an origin from what does not have one, the universe from its creator: it is a dualistic and *theistic* doctrine.

[320] Cf. Ibidem.
[321] *Republic* L, VII.
[322] Cf. Ibidem.

Glossary

Absicht	Intention
Achtung	Respect
Alleinheit	Unitotality
Alleinig	All-one
Anbetung	Worship (*Anbieten* means "to offer", so it is different than "devotion")
Anbilden	Fiction
Anschauung	Intuition
Auswendigen	Exteriorists
Begierde	Appetite
Begriff	Concept
Beschränkung	Delimitation
Bestimmung	Determination, Vocation
Bewußtseyn	Consciousness
Beziehung	Relationship
Bild	Image
Böse	Evil
Dasein	Existence
Eigenschaft	Property
Einbildungskraft	Imagination
Einsicht	Insight
Empfindung	Sensation
Endlichkeit	Finitude
Erkenntnis	Knowledge
Erkenntnissvermögen	Faculty of Cognition
Erscheinung	Appearance
Factum	Fact
Fähigkeit	Capacity
Form	Form
Fürwahrhalten	taking to be true
Gedächtnis	Memory
Gefühl	Feeling
Geist	Spirit
Gemüth	Mind
Gerechtig(ch)keit	Justice
Geschaftigkeit	Industry
Gesetzt	Law
Gesinnung	Disposition
Gestalt	Shape
Gewissen	Conscience
Gewißheit	Certainty
Glaube	Faith
Grund	Fundament, Ground
Güte	Goodness
Hervorbringen	produce
Hirngespinst	Fantasy (of the reason), delusion.
Inbegriff	Sum total

Inhalt	Content
Instinkt	Instinct
Inwendigen	Interiorists
Kraft	Power/Force
Leidenschaft	Passion
Lust	Desire
Mensch	Human Being
Merkmal	(distinctive) Mark
Neigung	Inclination
Nichtig	Nugatory
Personlichkeit	Personality
Pflicht	Duty
Recht	Right
Schranke	Limitation
Seele	Soul
Seiend	Existing
Selbständigkeit	Autonomy
Selbstsein	Being-oneself
Sharfsinn	Acumen
Sinn	Sense
Sinnlich	Sensory Sensible (last is suggested in Kant eng. trans.)
Sinnlichkeit	Sensibility
Sittlich	Moral
T(h)at	Deed[323]
Tiefsinn	Deep sense or Thoughtfullness
Tiefsinnig	Profound
Trennung	Separation
Trieb	Drive
Tugend	Virtue
Überzeugung	Convinction
Urkraft	Elemental Force/Power
Ursache	Cause
Ursprung	Origin
Veränderungskraft	Transformative power
Verbindung	Combination
Verhältnins	Relation
Verknüpfung	Connection
Vermögen	Faculty or Power
Vernunft	Reason
Verstand	Understanding
Vorsatz	Resolution
Vorsehung	Providence
Vorstellung	Representation
Wahn	Delusion
Wahrnehmung	Perception
Weisheit	Wisdom

[323] In some cases it has been translated with "action" putting the German between brackets.

Wesen (noun for creature)	Being(s)
Wirken (verb)	effect
Wirklich	Actual
Wirklichkeit	Actuality
Wissen	Knowing, Cognition
Zesammenhang	Interconnection
Zuversicht	Confidence
Zweck	Purpose