F. W. J. SCHELLING

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Philosophy and Religion

(1804)

Translated, annotated, and with an introduction by

KLAUS OTTMANN

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Contents

Translator's Introduction

We search everywhere for the Absolute, but all we ever find are things.
—Novalis

Regarding the problem of freedom... idealism leaves us rather at a loss.
—F. W. J. Schelling

When Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* first appeared in 1781, its "clearness and evidence" did not take possession of his contemporaries "as with a giant's hand," as it did of Samuel Taylor Coleridge when he first encountered it twenty years later.* At the end of the eighteenth century, Germany was inundated with publications of practical philosophy that followed the call of the French Enlightenment† to popularize philosophy; these were for the most part moralistic discussions on aesthetics and psychology aimed at the education of the masses. At the same time German academic philosophers were embroiled in the debate between Faith and Reason, and Kant's *Critique* was originally regarded as yet another contribution to the discussion of the latter. Not until the publication of Karl Leonhard Reinhold's *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy* in 1786–87 did the significance of Kant's *Critique* become widely noticed.‡

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* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Bibliographia Literaria or Biographical Sketches of* My Literary *Life and Opinions*, ed. J. Engell and W. J. Bate (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1984), vol. 1, p. 153. According to Coleridge's marginalia, he first read Kant's *Critique* in 1801.

† "Hâtons-nous de rendre la philosophie populaire (Let us hasten to make philosophy popular)." Denis Diderot, *Pensées sur l'interprétation de la Nature* (1753), cited in Albert Collignon, *Diderot: sa vie, ses œuvres, sa correspondance* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1895), pp. 231–32. Typical examples of popular philosophy were the essays compiled by Johann Jakob Engel under the title *Der Philosoph für die Welt* (The Philosopher for the World), 2 vols. (Berlin: In der Myliussischen Buchhandlung, 1801).

‡ Reinhold's *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie* were published as a series of articles in the Weimar journal *Der Teutsche Merkur* between August 1786 and September 1787.

Kant explained our a priori knowledge of the phenomenal world and justified the beliefs in that which lies beyond all experience — God, freedom, and immortality — by distinguishing between a knowable phenomenal world and the things-in-themselves, which we cannot know. Understanding cannot give us a priori knowledge of the things-in-themselves, only of appearances. Reason seeks to go beyond what is sensate but stops short of the intuition of the Absolute: "All our knowledge starts with the senses, proceeds from there to understanding, and ends with reason beyond which no higher faculty is found for elaborating the matter of intuition and bringing it under the highest unity of thought."*

Despite Kant's claim of having finally settled the debate between Reason and Faith with his *Critique*, the discussions were far from over. Kant's *Critique* led, on the one hand, to the metaphysical idealism of Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814), Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775–1854), and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), who sought to complete the Kantian program, each on his own idealist path; and, on the other, to a "nonphilosophy" (*Nichtphilosophie*)† or "unphilosophy" [*Unphilosophie*] that claimed that Kant's critical philosophy had made room for a separate Philosophy of Faith alongside the Philosophy of Reason, and was discussed most notably by Johann Georg Hammann (1730–1788),

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* Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 298, in *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Erste Abtheilung, vol. 4 (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1911), p. 191.

† Not to be confused with the understanding of nonphilosophy as a philosophy of life (*Lebensphilosophie*), attributed to Kierkegaard, Marx, and Nietzsche by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, which filled the philosophical void created by Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (which Merleau-Ponty considered the first work of nonphilosophy); see his "Möglichkeit der Philosophie" and "Philosophie und Nicht-Philosophie seit Hegel," in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Vorlesungen*, vol. 1, trans. Alexandre Métraux (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1973), pp. 110 and 237. Cf. also François Laruelle's notion of nonphilosophy as an autonomous, non-normative theory of science and philosophy, which he defines as a "theoretical, practical, and critical discourse, distinct from philosophy without being a metaphilosophy." François Laruelle, *Dictionnaire de la non-philosophy* (Paris: Editions Kimé, 1998; English translation by Taylor Adkins, published online, http://nsrnicek.googlepages.com/DictionaryNonPhilosophy.pdf (accessed November 25, 2009). See also François Laruelle, *Philosophie et non-philosophie* (Liège and Brussels: Pierre Mardaga, 1989).

Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743–1819),* and Carl August Eschenmayer (1768–1852).

Schelling's path, on which he first trod alongside Fichte but by 1801 increasingly on his own, was that of a "speculative physics" or Philosophy of Nature that sought to solve the "riddle of the world [*das Räthsel der Welt*], the question: How is the Absolute able to come out of itself and posit a world opposite itself?"† His path led from the Absolute to the finite natural world: "As long as we *presuppose* matter, that is, assume that it *precedes* our cognizance, it is not even possible to fully understand what we are talking about. Rather than groping blindly among incomprehensible concepts, instead let us ask what we understand and *can* understand originarily. *Originarily* we only understand *ourselves*, and because there are only *two* conclusions, one that makes matter the principle of spirit, and the other that makes spirit the principle of matter, for those of us seeking to understand *ourselves*, there remains only one assertion: not that spirit arises from matter but *that matter arises from spirit.*"‡ Schelling propagated an intellectual intuition that enables us to imagine the infinite or Absolute within ourselves independent of sensate perception and rational thought.

In 1799 the influential *Intelligenzblatt* of the *Erlanger Litteratur Zeitung* hailed Schelling as "one of our truly first-rate thinkers and a true universal genius" for having the "great, ingenious idea of extending transcendental idealism to a *system of the whole of knowledge*, that is, of establishing that system not only in *general* but in *deed*." It designated Schelling alongside

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* It was Jacobi who accused Kantianism of "nihilism" and uttered the famous quip: "Without the presupposition [of the 'thing in itself'], I was unable to enter into [Kant's] system, but with it I was unable to stay within it." F. H. Jacobi, *David Hume über den Glauben oder Idealismus und Realismus. Ein Gespräch* (David Hume on Faith or Idealism and Realism: A Conversation) (Breslau: Gottlieb Loewe, 1787), p. 223.

† F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophische Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kriticismus* (Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism, 1795), in *Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schellings Sämmliche Werke*, ed. K. F. A. Schellling (Stuttgart and Augsburg: J. G. Cotta'scher Verlag 1856ff., vol. 1, p. 310 (*SW* hereafter).

‡ F. W. J. Schelling, *Abhandlungen zur Erläuterung des Idealismus der Wissenschaftslehre* (Explicatory Essay of the Idealism in the Science of Knowledge, 1796–97), *SW* 1:373–74.

Kant as one of the most important philosophers of nature: "Whoever lays claim to the title of *Naturphilosoph* must study the writings of these two scholars [Kant and Schelling]."*

Eschenmayer, a philosopher as well as a physician, sought to ground the natural sciences, especially chemistry (which, still bearing the stain of alchemy, had been singled out by Kant as not yet having achieved the status of an apodictic science) in Kant's theory of dynamics by way of two originary forces — attraction and repulsion — that produce various gradations of matter or potencies.† He was praised early on by Schelling for applying the Kantian principles of dynamics "in genuine philosophical spirit [*mit ächt-philosophischem Geiste*]" to empirical natural sciences.‡

Eschenmayer, with whom Schelling maintained a lasting friendship that was uncharacteristically warm and collegial, provided Schelling's philosophical development with crucial impetus along the way. Each publication by Schelling was countered with a corresponding article or letter by Eschenmayer, who carefully dissected Schelling's theories and often pointed out inconsistencies in his arguments. The "sharp-witted" (*scharfsinninge*)§ Eschenmayer was Schelling's most diligent and constructive critic.

For Schelling, *Philosophy and Religion* represented a new approach to the goal initially set in 1801 with his *Representation of My System of Philosophy,* the first system of philosophy he had conceived entirely on his own, independent of Fichte, after having seen "the light in philosophy," which led him to philosophize, as it were, out of the Absolute itself: "All philosophizing begins, and has always begun, with the idea of the Absolute come alive." (16) In *Philosophy and Religion,* he tackled the problem of the manifestation of the finite world

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* Cited in Immanuel Kant, *Opus Postumum,* trans. E. Förster and M. Rosen (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993), p. 275 n89.

† C. A. Eschenmayer, *Sätze aus der Natur-Metaphysik auf chemische und medicinische Gegenstände angewandt* (Propositions from the Metaphysics of Nature Applied to Chemical and Medical Topics) (Tübingen: Jakob Friedrich Heerbrandt, 1797).

‡ F. W. J. Schelling, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* (Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature, 1797/1802), *SW* 2:313.

§ F. W. J. Schelling, *Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie* (Representation of My System of Philosophy, 1801), *SW* 4:108.

and human freedom by evoking Plato and Spinoza, yet by his own admission he did not reach his goal "with complete determinateness" until 1809 when he published his *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*.*

While Schelling's *System* of 1801 was only the first of numerous works to construct an objective idealism, the fundamentals of the *System* Schelling conceived during his *annus mirabilis* remained valid until his death. As Horst Fuhrmans writes, Fichte's work "challenged him to come into his own, to draw up *his* system, which, in all its transformations, he would never again abandon."† Schelling regarded his *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom* as a synthesis of both his *System* and *Religion and Philosophy;* he would later write that it was in the latter work that he finally overcame the rigidity [*Starrheit*] of Fichte's philosophy.‡

As Schelling explains in the preliminary remarks to *Religion and Philosophy*, a second work in the Platonic style of a philosophical conversation was to follow the publication of *Bruno or On the Divine and Natural Principle of Things*,§ which had appeared in 1802. "External circumstances," not further elaborated on by Schelling, prohibited the completion of said work, and in light of Eschenmayer's publication of *Philosophy in Its Transition to Nonphilosophy*¶ in 1803, Schelling decided to use

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* "The author has confined himself to investigations into the philosophy of nature ever since the first presentation of his system (in the *Journal of Speculative Physics*), the continuation of which was unfortunately interrupted by external circumstances until a new beginning was made in *Philosophy and Religion* — which, admittedly, remained unclear due to the fault of its presentation. Therefore, the present essay is the first in which the author puts forth his concept of the ideal part of philosophy with complete determinateness... Up to now the author has nowhere expressed himself regarding the main points, the freedom of will, good and evil, personality, etc. (except in *Philosophy and Religion*)." F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der Freiheit* (Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom, 1809), *SW* 7: 333–37.

† *F. W. J. Schelling: Briefe und Dokumente*, ed. Horst Fuhrmans (Bonn: H. Bouvier u. Co., 1962), vol. 1, p. 231.

‡ F. W. J. Schelling, *Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie* (Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology, 1856), *SW* 11: 465 n.

§ F. W. J. Schelling, *Bruno oder über das göttliche und natürliche Princip der Dinge. Ein Gespräch*, *SW* 4.

¶ C. A Eschenmayer, *Die Philosophie in ihrem Uebergang zur Nichtphilosophie* (Erlangen: Walthersche Kunst- und Buchhandlung, 1803).

much of the same material for a new work. Because it is the only work prior to the *Philosophical Investigations* that discusses the issue of freedom of will, it is regarded as a precursor to Schelling's 1809 magnum opus on human freedom.

We now know that the abandoned work that was to follow *Bruno* is most likely the fragmentary and posthumously published *Clara or On Nature's Connection to the Spirit World,*° also written as a series of conversations, whose "spiritual" nature may have been prompted not by Karoline Schelling's death in 1809, as had long been assumed, but rather by the death of her daughter from a previous marriage, Auguste (Gustel) Böhmer, in 1800.†

With his book, Eschenmayer sought to accomplish for nonphilosophy what Fichte and Schelling did for philosophy. His criticism of Schelling boiled down to the questions of how the Absolute in Schelling's system can come out of itself and become difference. In Eschenmayer's view, this question cannot be answered by philosophical reflection, only by a Philosophy of Faith: "That higher act, which encompasses all but that which to include into philosophical reflection would be a fruitless effort, is *faith*, and it alone resolves the entire field of speculation in the most perfect manner by limiting volition and cognizance but is itself unlimited and will remain unlimited for eternity."‡

Schelling responded to Eschenmayer's criticism in *Philosophy and Religion* by proposing a new theory, that of the falling-away [*Abfall*] of the finite world from the infinite by way of a qualitative leap: "There is no continuous transition from the Absolute to the actual; the origin of the phenomenal world is conceivable only as a complete falling-away from absoluteness by means of a leap [*Sprung*]." (26)

The theory of a falling-away forms the core of Schelling's argument: the original sin is not the Fall of Man but rather

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° F. W. J. Schelling, *Clara oder Zusammenhang der Natur mit der Geisterwelt,* ed. K. F. A. Schelling (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta'scher Verlag, 1862).

† For a summary in English of recent scholarship on the issue of dating *Clara,* see Fiona Steinkamp's introduction in *Clara or, On Nature's Connection to the Spirit World* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 2002), xiii–xvii.

‡ Eschenmayer, *Die Philosophie in ihrem Uebergang zur Nichtphilosophie,* par. 76.

Creation itself, the fall of the finite world from the infinite or Absolute. (31) The radical approach of *Philosophy and Religion* consisted in Schelling's redefinition of his Philosophy of Nature in terms of a Philosophy of History: "God is the *absolute* harmony of necessity and freedom, and this harmony cannot be revealed in individual destinies but only in history as a whole; consequently, only history as a whole is a revelation of God — and then only a progressively evolving revelation... History is an epic composed in the mind of God. It has two main parts: one depicting mankind's egress from its center to its farthest point of displacement; the other, its return. The former is, as it were, history's *Iliad;* the latter, its *Odyssey.* In the one, the direction is centrifugal; in the other, it becomes centripetal. In this way, the great purpose of the phenomenal world reveals itself in history." (44) The final cause of history is the "reconciliation of the falling-away." (50)

But Eschenmayer remained unconvinced of Schelling's new solution. He wrote to Schelling's friend Johann Jacob Wagner: "Schelling has saved himself just as little with his idea of a falling-away (in "Philosophie and Religion" 1804) as with his other attempts."* Eschenmayer and Schelling continued to be divided on one major point, which Eschenmayer summed up to Wagner: "Here is the point where I part with Schelling. For him God is the Absolute, for me the Absolute is the after-image [*Nachbild*] of reason, and God is beyond it."†

For Schelling there is no need for a separate Philosophy of Faith‡ or nonphilosophy in order to discuss the concepts of God, freedom, and immortality: "Any philosopher would be weary of not gaining a much clearer cognition of those same subjects through knowledge and in knowledge than what emerges for Eschenmayer from faith and premonition." (8–9) Schelling stayed true to Kant's spirit by rejecting the

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* Letter from Eschenmayer to J. J. Wagner, November 26, 1804, in *F. W. J. Schelling: Briefe und Dokumente,* vol. 1, p. 320n.

† Letter from Eschenmayer to J. J. Wagner, April 5, 1805, in ibid.

‡ He had already written in 1801 to Fichte, in rather terse tone, that "you have been forced... to transfer [the Absolute] into the sphere of faith, of which, in my opinion, it can be no more a question in philosophy than it is in geometry." Letter from Schelling to J. G. Fichte, October 3, 1801, in *F. W. J. Schelling: Briefe und Dokumente,* vol. 2, pp. 348–56.

idea of a separate Philosophy of Faith. Kant had argued for just such a unity of philosophy and religion in the preface to his 1794 edition of *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*: "Otherwise one would have two religions within each person, which is absurd, or one religion and one cult... both would have to be shaken up so that they become mixed together for a short period of time, after which they would separate again like oil and water, with the purely moral (the religion of reason) floating on top."*

Schelling's *Philosophy and Religion* was written during one of the most eventful periods of his life. In June of 1803 Schelling finally married his longtime lover, Karoline Schlegel, who had received permission from Carl August, Duke of Saxe-Weimar to divorce her second husband, August Wilhelm Schlegel. At the time, Schelling, who was educated at a prestigious Protestant school, the Tübinger Stift (along with his friends Hegel and Hölderlin), was teaching philosophy at the predominantly Catholic university of Würzburg that had attracted many followers of Jacobi and Jacob Friedrich Fried, another declared enemy of Schelling. Consequently, Schelling's philosophy became the target of incessant attacks. As Xavier Tilliette writes, "by settling in Würzburg, Schelling stirred up a hornet's nest."† The sharp, polemic tone of *Philosophy and Religion*, especially manifest in Schelling's preliminary remarks, was not directed at his friend Eschenmayer but at "the horde of rowdy opponents" (4) led by two influential high-school teachers from Munich, Kajetan Weiller and Jacob Salat, who, according to Tilliette, "dedicated their lives to pillorying Schelling."‡ Horst Fuhrmans describes the attacks against Schelling in 1803 as a "furious drumfire": "In low-brow reviews and endless polemic commentaries and publications, an assault was launched against the new 'obscurants' and 'mystics,' the 'hierophants of the new Eleusinian mystery

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* *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*, in Immanuel Kant, *Werkausgabe*, ed. Wilhelm Weischedel, 12 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1982), 8:659–60.

† Xavier Tilliette, *Schelling: Biographie*, trans. Susanne Schaper (Stuttgart: Klettt-Cotta, 2004), p. 145.

‡ Ibid., p. 144.

cults' in order to defend against the advance or even victory of the Romantic mindset."*

Schelling's little book on religion and philosophy, however, was largely ignored, as Schelling himself noted in obvious consternation in 1809.† Even today, his book is considered a "hastily written and premature" response to Eschenmayer.‡ Its reputation may have become tarnished early on by Schelling's own admission of its faulty presentation. In a letter to Eschenmayer, written shortly after he had sent him a copy of his book, Schelling provided Eschenmayer with clarifications in regard to his definition of the Absolute: "It might be necessary to improve upon my in many instances faulty expressions as far as the main idea is concerned. Would the following exposition meet with your approval?"§

The cruel judgment delivered in 1887 by Heinrich Heine, who has been credited by Adorno with almost single-handedly dealing the death blow to the German Romantic soul,¶ did not help the stature of Schelling's book. In *On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany,* Heine writes, "Anno 1804 God finally appeared to Herr Schelling, full-fledged, in his book entitled: *Philosophy and Religion*... Here philosophy stops with Herr Schelling, and poetry, that is to say, folly begins."**

Compared to Kant and Hegel, Schelling was practically unknown outside academia until the mid-1950s even in Germany, and many of his works remained unread and untranslated for decades. Not until the centennial of his death in 1954 did Schelling receive attention by contemporary philosophers, most notably by Karl Jaspers who considered

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* *F. W. J. Schelling: Briefe und Dokumente,* p. 297.

† "Perhaps this essay will be granted the same respect and attention [*Achtung*] that [unbidden followers and opponents] showed the earlier related text, *Philosophy and Religion,* by completely ignoring it." F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit* (Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom), *SW*7:410n.

‡ Tilliette, *Schelling,* p. 178.

§ Letter from Schelling to Eschenmayer, July 10, 1804. In *F. W. J. Schelling: Briefe und Dokumente,* p. 321 and below, p. 60.

¶ See Theodor W. Adorno, "Heine the Wound," in *Notes to Literature,* vol. 1, trans. S. W. Nicholsen (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1991).

** Heinrich Heine, *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland* (Halle: Otto Händel, 1887), pp. 117–18.

Schelling an early existentialist. More recently, postmodern philosophers have reclaimed Schelling* and even begun a rehabilitation of the Absolute.† In the 1990s a renewed interest in the theological-philosophical disputes that lasted for more than a decade at the end of the eighteenth- and the beginning of the nineteenth century‡ has made Schelling's *Philosophy and Religion* an object of renewed scholarly interest, and in 2008 a new German-language critical edition of the work was published.§ It seems that the time for Schelling has finally arrived. As Hermann Braun, professor emeritus of philosophy at the Kirchliche Hochschule Wuppertal, announced in the *Philosophische Rundschau* in 1990, there is "a need for Schelling."¶

Schelling's works constitute a *minor philosophy* in the sense of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's definition of a "minor literature."** But a minor literature does not come from a minor language; "it is rather that which minority constructs within a major language."†† According to Deleuze and Guattari, a minor literature is "always connected to *its own*

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* Most notably Slavoj Žižek in his *The Indivisible Remainder: An Essay on Schelling and Related Matters* (London: Verso, 1996).

† See especially Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute: Or, Why is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* (London: Verso, 2001); and Alain Badiou, *Being and Event,* trans. O. Feltham (London: Continuum, 2006), Appendix 5 (Meditation 33): "On Absoluteness."

‡ The so-called "Streit um die göttlichen Dinge" (The Conflict Concerning Divine Things). See, especially, *Der Streit um die göttlichen Dinge (1799–1812),* ed. W. Jaeschke (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1999).

§ F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophie und Religion,* ed. A. Denker and H. Zaborowski (Freiburg and Munich: Verlag Karl Alber, 2008), with essays by Christoph Asmuth, Christian Dantz, Alfred Denker, Walter E. Ehrhardt, Oliver Florig, and Holger Zaborowski.

¶ Hermann Braun, "Ein Bedürfnis nach Schelling," *Philosophische Rundschau* 37 (1990).

** Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature,* trans. D. Polan (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1986).

†† Ibid., p. 16

abolition."° It is a language "affected with a high coefficent of deterritorialization . . . [that] turns language into something impossible."†

Because of Schelling's determination to philosophize on the edge of the "originary abyss" (*anfängliche Ungrund*),‡ i.e., in the face of the Absolute, his philosophy is associated — almost by default — with *failure*, with its own impossibility. In wanting to complete Kant's philosophy, Schelling ended up failing philosophy altogether in an endgame of theory§ by repeatedly tearing down his own achievements. Just as Kafka introduced the practice of writing as failure in his story *The Penal Colony* with the metaphor of a writing-apparatus, which was designed to inscribe the judgment onto the skin of the condemned-to-death but ultimately failed, so Schelling attempted to philosophize out of the Absolute itself in spite of its impossibility.

In his study of Schelling, Slavoj Žižek describes the philosopher as "a kind of 'vanishing mediator' between the Idealism of the Absolute and post-Hegelian universe of finitude-temporality-contingency, that his thought — for a brief moment, as it were, in a flash — renders visible something that was invisible beforehand and withdrew into invisibility thereafter."¶ This description echoes Jean-François Lyotard's famous definition of the postmodern as that which puts forth "the Nonrepresentable in presentation itself" by not allowing the "unrepresentable to be put forward as the missing contents" while retaining form for "solace and pleasure."°° By understanding postmodernism as a condition rather than as a historically defined period of time, as Lyotard does,††

° Ibid., p. 6.

† Ibid., p. 16.

‡ Schelling, *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit, SW7*: 408.

§ On the endgame of Idealism, see *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory: Three Essays by F. W. J. Schelling*, trans. and ed. T. Pfau (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.)

¶ Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder*, p. 8.

°° Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Theory and History of Literature, vol. 10, trans. G. Bennington and B. Massumi (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 81.

†† Ibid., p. 79.

Schelling could arguable be regarded as a postmodern philosopher because he put forward the Absolute as the unthinkable, as the abyss of that prior to which we cannot think [*das Unvordenkliche*],* in philosophy itself: "In presupposing a merely mediated knowledge of the Absolute (irrespective of how the mediation occurs), the Absolute in philosophy can only appear as something that is presumed in order that it can be philosophized about." (16)

Rather than executing a somersault that would land him safely on the ground, with one foot on reason and the other on faith, as advocated by Jacobi with his *salto mortale* analogy,† Schelling attempts a reverse (premodern) *leap* into the Absolute within philosophy in order to initiate a "reverse formation [*Zurückbildung*] of difference into oneness" (33) that, like Kierkegaard's later existential leap to faith, is a decisive leap in the face of certain failure.‡

As Žižek notes, the deterritorialized philosophy of Schelling speaks with three tongues: "the language of speculative idealism; the language of anthropomorphic-mystical theosophy; the post-idealist language of contingency and finitude. The paradox, of course, is that *it was his very 'regression' from pure philosophical idealism to pre-modern theosophical problematic which enables him to overtake modernity itself.*"§

Schelling resembles Husserl's *Selbstdenker,* an autonomous thinker who does not seek solace in his system but rather reinvents himself at every turn by articulating the limits of philosophy, its possibilities and its confines: "Only secondary thinkers, who in truth should not be called philosophers, are consoled by their definitions, beating to death with their word-concepts the problematic telos of philosophizing. In that obscure "knowledge," and in the word-concepts of the formulae, the historical is concealed; it is,

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* Cf. F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung* (Philosophy of Revelation, 1858), *SW* 14: 347: "The existence prior to which we cannot think [*das unvordenkliche Existirende*] precedes all concepts."

† Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (Breslau: Gottlieb Löwe, 1785).

‡ See also my *The Genius Decision: The Extraordinary and the Postmodern Condition* (Putnam, Conn.: Spring Publications, 2004), part 2, chap. 3: "Kierkegaard's Leap."

§ Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder,* p. 8.

according to its own proper sense, the spiritual inheritance of him who philosophizes; and in the same way, obviously, he understands the others in whose company, in critical friendship and enmity, he philosophizes... His historical picture, in part made by himself and in part taken over, his 'poetic invention of the history of philosophy,' has not and does not remain fixed — that he knows; and yet every 'invention' serves him and can serve him in understanding himself and his aim."*

Schelling was a thinker who, in the words of the philosopher and naturalist Henrik Steffens (1773–1845), one of his most noted students, "boldly and menacingly faced the entire army of a fainting epoch."† For Schelling, to philosophize meant to abandon all hope, all nostalgia: "He who wants to truly philosophize has to let go of all hope, all desire, all nostalgia; he must not want anything, not know anything; he must feel simple and poor, give up everything in order to gain everything. It is a difficult step, difficult to, as it were, depart from the last shore."‡

A Note about the Translation

The following translation follows the first edition of *Philosophie und Religion,* published in Tübingen in 1804 by J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung, rather than the 1860 version included in the sixth volume of Schelling's *Sämmtliche Werke,* which was edited by his son, Karl Friedrich August Schelling. While there are no textual differences, the newer edition lost some of the typographical eccentricities of Schelling's time. In general, the following translation has sought to preserve

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* Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology,* trans. D. Carr (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 394–95.

† Wilhelm Weischedel, *Die philosophische Hintertreppe* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1975), p. 201.

‡ F.W.J. Schelling, *Ueber die Natur der Philosophie als Wissenschaft* (On the Nature of Philosophy as Science, 1821), *SW* 9:218.

Schelling's language, which is considerably richer and more nuanced than today's, without sacrificing readability.

Dealing with a text that is more than two-hundred years old presents formidable challenges even to a native reader. For this reason, I regularly consulted Grimms' *Deutsches Wörterbuch*° to ascertain the historical usage and meanings of certain words. For those familiar with Schelling's terminology I have included a German-English glossary.

Two translated terms require discussion here: *Einbildung* and *Einheit*. *Einbildung or Ein-Bildung,* commonly translated as "imagination," is one of the more challenging of Schelling's terms to render into English. It combines image (*Bild*) and education (*Bildung*) with the concept of *Einheit* (oneness or identity), suggesting an imaginative becoming-one through a process of formation. Thus, at times, Schelling also refers to this as *In-Eins-Bildung.*† Coleridge, arguably the most diligent among Schelling's English readers, noticed Schelling's "unitive" use of *Einbildung* and its relation to *Einheit* and appropriated it for his *Bibliographia Literaria*, even coining a new word for it: "esemplastic," meaning "to mold into one."‡ I have chosen to translate *Einbildung* as "imaginative formation."

Schelling's *Einheit* is to be comprehended as a whole that has never been divided and will never be united, much like Nietzsche's *Ur-Eine* (originary oneness).§ Neither identity nor difference, it nevertheless is endowed with the power to create the finite world of differences through the process of *Einbildung*. As Gilles Deleuze has pointed out, Schelling brought "difference out of the night of the Identical."¶ Alain Badiou's notion of oneness as an operational structure may come closest to Schelling's notion of *Einheit* in the Absolute.

° Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch,* 16 vols. (Leipzig: S. Hirzel 1854–1960).

†Cf. e.g, *SW* 5:348 and 7:60.

‡Coleridge, *Bibliographia Literaria,* vol. 1, p. 168. See also the extensive footnote ad loc. on the prevalent use of this concept throughout German Idealism.

§On Nietzsche's *Ur-Eine,* see my *The Genius Decision: The Extraordinary and the Postmodern Condition*, part 2, chap. 4: "Nietzsche's Active Aesthetics and the *Ur-Eine*."

¶ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1995), p. 191.

Badiou defines oneness as an *operation*. According to Badiou, there is no *one*, only the "count-as-one" (*compte-pour-un*).* It is a "presentation" and the multiple, the finite world, is an "operational result" of the presentation: "[B]eing is what presents (itself). On this basis, it is neither one (because only presentation itself is pertinent to the count-as-one), nor multiple (because the multiple is *solely* the regime of presentation)." Any presented multiplicity, or in Schelling's words, any finite counter-image of the absolute ideas, is a situation, and "every situation admits its own particular operator of the count-as-one." It is thus *structure*. Badiou concludes: "The count-as-one (the structure) installs the universal pertinence of the one/multiple couple in any situation."† I have thus translated *Einheit* in most instances as "oneness" rather than identity.

I have supplemented Schelling's sparse footnotes with annotations of my own, which are enclosed in brackets and meant to aid the understanding of references that are not easily accessed by contemporary readers. Unless noted otherwise, all translations of non-English quotations in the footnotes are my own.

I am indebted to my copy editor, Michaelyn Mitchell, for taking on the challenge of editing a text on such an unfathomable topic as the Absolute.

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* Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 24.

† Ibid.

Philosophy and Religion

(1804)

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Preliminary Remarks

When I published *Bruno or On the Divine and Natural Principle of Things* in 1802,* it was meant to be the beginning of a series of publications in the form of philosophical conversations whose topics were already proposed therein.† For some time now, a second conversation has been lacking only its final redaction; however, external circumstances have not permitted its completion.‡ The following pages contain much of the same material as that second conversation, albeit not in conversational style. If the various parts of this text may seem to the attentive reader ripped from a higher, organic whole, it is because of the foregoing reason. The decision to convey these ideas in the present form was prompted by several public remarks, notably by Eschenmayer's latest book§ (wherein he seeks once again to complement philosophy with faith). Publication of these ideas in the form of a conversation would undoubtedly have been preferable, but the nobler conversational form — the only one that can embrace an autonomous philosophy in an independent and free-spirited way — is not necessarily called for when a purpose is to be effected. For the end of the philosophical dialogue lies in itself; it can never serve a purpose outside of itself. Just as a sculpture does not cease to be a work of art even if it lies at the bottom of the sea, so indeed every work of philosophy endures, even

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* [F. W. J. Schelling, *Bruno oder über das göttliche und natürliche Princip der Dinge. Ein Gespräch*, *SW* 4. English translation by Michael G. Vater (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1984).]

† *Bruno*, p. 35 ["It seems to me that we should further discuss the institution of the mystery cults and the nature of mythology. And it seems perfectly appropriate that Bruno... speak about the kind of philosophy he thinks the mystery cults must have taught... And then... spell out the allegories and actions that might be used to represent a mystery. And finally let one of us, or all of us together... tackle the discussion of poetry and mythology." *SW* 4: 234.]

‡ [See above, "Translator's Introduction."]

§ [C. A. Eschenmayer, *Die Philosophie in ihrem Uebergang zur Nichtphilosophie* (Philosophy in Its Transition to Nonphilosophy) (Erlangen: Walthersche Kunst- und Buchhandlung, 1803).]

if uncomprehended in its own time. One would be grateful if it were merely a matter of incomprehension. Instead, the work is usually refitted and appropriated by various entities — some playing the part of the opponent; others, that of the proponent. The misinterpretations and deformations created by such methods merit no consideration. It is a different case altogether with the contrarianism [*Widerstreit*] of noble minds and their demands on science as a whole, as these deserve much respect for what they contribute to the enlightenment of the world, regardless of whether or not those demands are met.

We nevertheless do not doubt that the philosophers of our time will take offense to the philosophical tenor of old that we have sought to resound. But we also know that these things nevertheless cannot be profaned, that they must subsist through themselves, and that those who do not possess them already ought not to and cannot possess them at all. We will therefore keep silent about the uncouth misinterpretations of our opponents; they may yet learn of the principles of these teachings and their consequences on this occasion. We seek all the more to repel the officiousness of our expounders and parroting followers and urge them to consider that some minds do not produce solely for the purpose of publishing books to degrade and bring into contempt a noble subject through gross applications and mindless yarn-spinning. The horde of rowdy opponents will eventually trail off when it realizes that it has exhausted itself to no avail. In Germany we are less likely to see the dwindling of those who, without vocation, make themselves into followers of a doctrine and who, without being inspirited, bear the thyrsus* to the nuisance of both the wise and the simple-minded. Those incapable of understanding science's mysteries distend the mass of borrowed thoughts, which they deposit into it, into a caricature. They express the truth, whose meaning is grounded in depth, in superficial sentences that have no meaning and merely amaze the canaille, or abuse language, albeit unintentionally, by clothing a hollow disposition in words that have stirred up their weak imagination. Germans rhapsodize about

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* [Plato, *Phaedo* 69*d*: "Many are thyrsus-bearers, but few are mystics."]

almost everything; like bees, they busily carry off and process that which blossoms and is produced independently of them. And when they do make the effort to have thoughts of their own, for which they themselves can be held responsible — and abstain from borrowing the thoughts of others to whom they would then offload any responsibility — they are held back by cheap concerns for themselves; already so inflated with the property of others, they would burst if they had any thoughts of their own. They may be satisfied with their superficial understanding of these mysteries, but as regards their deeper meaning:

Don't move, goat! Or you'll get burned.°

° ["Rühre nicht, Bock! denn es brennt." Here Schelling repeats August Wilhelm Schlegel's translation of the only surviving line of Aeschylus's lost Satyric play *Prometheus the Fire-Bearer* ("Goat, you will grieve for your beard," Nauck, *Trag. Graec. Frag. Aeschylus* 207), published in Schlegel's elegy, *Die Kunst der Griechen* (The Art of the Greeks, 1799).

Aeschylus's line was first interpreted as a warning of the dangers of science to the common man by Rousseau in his 1752 *Lettre à Lecat:* "The torch of Prometheus is the torch of the sciences, which is made for the purpose of inspiring the great minds... the satyr who, seeing fire for the first time, runs to it and wants to embrace it represents the vulgar men who, seduced by the brilliance of its knowledge, unwisely engage in its study." Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. B. Gagnebin and M. Raymond, 4 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1959–69), 3.102.]

Introduction

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

Later the once-secret mystery cults became public and contaminated with foreign elements from popular belief. In order to keep itself pure, philosophy retreated from religion and became, in contrast to it, esoteric. Religion, which against its originary nature had intermingled with the real, sought to become an outward power, and since it lost any momentum to reach the well of truth, it also sought to stifle any truth outside of itself.

Thus religion gradually dispossessed philosophy of those themes it had dealt with since antiquity, and philosophy found itself confined to that which had no value for reason.

On the other hand, the sublime teachings, claimed onesidedly by religion for itself from the shared property of philosophy, lost their significance and, having been replanted to a completely different soil than the one they sprouted from, became altogether transformed.

This opposition resulted in a false accordance of philosophy with religion, one that arose from philosophers having lowered themselves to treat the origins of reason and ideas as concepts. This is exemplified by the dogmatism with which philosophy gained broad and considerable recognition while completely sacrificing its true character.

As this dogmatic knowledge was questioned more precisely and subjected to critique, it became evident that while it was applicable to objects of perception and finite things, it was only a bystander or, in fact, outright blind toward matters of reason. Because philosophy was acknowledged and

accredited now more than ever as the only possible knowledge, the increasingly thorough self-awareness of its invalidity ran parallel to the rising value of its opposite, i.e., *faith,* so that ultimately all that is essentially philosophical in philosophy was completely given over to religion.

It would not be hard to cite evidence: I simply call to mind that this period in general was sufficiently defined by *Kant.*

The last echoes of the old, true philosophy were heard from Spinoza. He led philosophy back to its proper subjects although he did not steer clear of the pretense and tawdriness of another, albeit different, kind of dogmatism.

Aside from the teachings on the Absolute, the true mysteries of philosophy have as their most noble and indeed their sole content the eternal birth of all things and their relationship to God. All of ethics, as a directive for a beatific life, is built upon this and is a consequence of it, as it is found in the ambit of sacred teachings.

Those teachings, detached from the whole of philosophy, are called, not without reason, Philosophy of Nature.

That such teachings, which by definition are nothing if not speculative, are met with the most contradictory and abrogating judgments is to be expected; just as every partial view can be opposed by another partial view, so a comprehensive view, which encompasses the entire universe, can be opposed by all possible partial views. But it is quite impossible, on the one hand, to accredit a doctrine with being a philosophy, and a complete one at that, and on the other, to declare it in need of being complemented by faith; this contradicts and nullifies its concept because its essence consists in possessing clear knowledge and intuitive cognition of that which nonphilosophy means to grasp in faith.

Such a intention lies before our very eyes in C. A. Eschenmayer's book *Philosophy in Its Transition to Nonphilosophy,* which would be entirely incomprehensible if it did not throw light upon the fact that its astute, speculative author barely addresses the issues that cause him to refer to faith, and that it is for this reason only that he takes refuge in the latter. To give only one example: any philosopher would be weary of not gaining a much clearer cognition of those same subjects through knowledge and in knowledge than what emerges for

Eschenmayer from faith and premonition [*Ahndung*]. Whatever positives he cites as justification for his faith — aside from the impossibility of finding in philosophy satisfactory answers to certain questions — cannot be regarded as evidence since faith by definition will cease being faith if it can be evidenced. It is in contradiction with what he himself admits. Because if cognizance [*Erkennen*], as he says,* becomes extinguished in the Absolute, then any ideal relationship to it, which lies beyond that point, is possible only through the reawakening of difference. Either this extinction is truly complete, and cognizance is therefore an absolute in which all desire that springs from the conflict between subject and object is dissolved, or the opposite is true. In the latter case, cognizance is not really achieved by reason, and thus one cannot infer from it that the true Absolute is unsatisfactory. In the former case, no higher potency, be it faith or premonition, yields anything better or more perfect than what is already embodied in said cognizance. Rather, what is set in opposition to it under this or that name is either only a particular view of that general relationship to the Absolute or, on the contrary and far from being a true elevation and higher potency, a lowering from the highest unity of cognizance to a cognizance of a new difference.

Indeed, the particular, that which premonition or religious intuition is said to have the advantage over rational cognition is, according to most accounts, nothing other than a leftover from the difference that remains in the former but has completely disappeared in the latter. Each of us is compelled by nature to seek an Absolute, even those still wrapped up in finite things, but if we want to fix one's thoughts on it, it eludes us. It hovers around us eternally, but, as Fichte has said, it is only there if one does not have it; as soon as one possesses it, it vanishes. It appears before the soul only at the moment when subjective activity joins the objective in unexpected harmony, which because it is unexpected has an advantage over free, desireless rational cognition to manifest itself as happiness, as illumination, or as revelation. But as soon as this harmony is brought about, reasoning sets in, and the apparition takes flight. In this fleeting form, religion — inasmuch as it is also

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* Eschenmayer, op. cit., par. 33.

still in the domain of reflective cognition and dividedness — is a mere apparition of God within the soul. In contrast, philosophy is necessarily a higher and, as it were, a more tranquil perfection of the spirit; it is always within the Absolute, with no danger of the Absolute running away from it because philosophy itself has withdrawn into a territory above reason.

I will therefore leave faith, the premonition of beatitude, etc. — which are described by Eschenmayer and which I regard as beneath philosophy rather than above it — in its realm. I will return, as per my original intention, to reclaiming those topics that have been appropriated by the dogmatism of religion and nonphilosophy on behalf of reason and philosophy.

What these are will unfold in the following.

The Idea of the Absolute

It would be entirely in accordance with the objective of maintaining an empty space outside of philosophy — one that the soul can fill up through faith and devotion — to place *God* above the Absolute and eternal as the infinitely higher potency of the latter.* However, it is quite self-evident that there can be nothing above the Absolute and that this idea excludes any kind of limitation — and not accidentally but rather by its very nature. Because God would again be absolute and eternal; but the Absolute cannot be different from absoluteness, and the eternal cannot be different from eternalness, since these are not generic concepts. It necessarily follows that whoever places anything above the rational Absolute as *God* does not truly perceive it as such and that it is therefore only an illusion.

How is it that this view recognizes the Absolute as an absolute but does not regard it as God?

This error is almost inevitably made by those who arrive at the idea of the Absolute through the description that philosophy provides, as they never achieve more than a conditional knowledge of it; but it is not possible to gain an unconditional knowledge from a conditional one. All descriptions of the Absolute come about as an antithesis of the nonabsolute; namely, the complete opposite of all that constitutes the nature of the latter is ascribed to the former. In short, the description is merely negative and never puts the *Absolute itself* before the soul.

Thus the nonabsolute, e.g., is recognized as something of which the concept is not adequate to being, since here being, i.e., reality, does not result from thought; rather, the concept needs something added for it to become being. It is thus conditional, nonabsolute.

Furthermore, nonabsoluteness is perceived by that in which the particular is determined, not by the general but rather by an external entity, and thus has an irrational relationship to it.

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* See Eschenmayer, op. cit., par. 40f.

The same opposition can be found in other concepts of reflective cognition. Now, if the philosopher describes the idea of the Absolute so that all difference contained in the non-absolute has to be negated, then those who want to arrive at the idea of the Absolute from the outside understand it in the above manner — namely, by taking the opposite of reflective cognition and all possible differences of the world of appearances for the point of departure of philosophy — and regard the Absolute as the *product* that brings about the unification of opposites, whereby the Absolute is defined by them in no way in and by itself but through identification or indifferentiation [*Indifferenzirung*]. Or even more crudely, they think of the philosopher as holding the ideal or subjective in one hand and the real or objective in the other and then have him strike the palms of his hands together so that one abrades the other. The product of this abrasion [*Aufreibung*] is the Absolute. One may tell them hundreds of times that there is no subjective or objective for us and that the Absolute is the absolute identity of both only as a *negation* of those opposites; yet they still do not understand and instead stick with the only idea they do understand, namely that which is constructed into a *composite*. Little do they realize that the description of the Absolute as identity of opposites is merely negative and that the philosopher demands something *entirely different* for the cognition of the Absolute, thus declaring said description as altogether insufficient. Even intellectual intuition [*intellectuelle Anschauung*] is according to their psychological concepts a mere intuition of this self-created identity by way of the inner sense and therefore entirely empirical since it is in fact a cognition that perceives the in-itself [*An-sich*] of the soul. It is called intuition only because the essence of the soul, which is one and the same [*Eins und es selbst*] with the Absolute, can have no other than an unmediated relation to the latter.

It escapes them no less that all the forms in which the Absolute is articulated through reflective cognition can be reduced to just three possible ones, which correspond to the three types of syllogisms* and that only the *unmediated intuitive cognition* exceeds any conceptual determination.

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* Cf. *Bruno*, p. 166 [*SW* 4: 300].

The first form of positing absoluteness is the *categorical;* it can be expressed through reflective cognition negatively by a neither-nor; it is clear that no positive cognition by any means lies herein and that only the eventual productive intuition will fill this void and grant positivity in said neither-nor.

The second form of manifestation of the Absolute in reflective cognition is the *hypothetical.* Whenever there is a subject and an object, the Absolute is the equal essence of both. Identity is predicated merely and simply upon the same essence or *in-itself* of the one or the other — neither of which is subjective or objective — namely, upon itself and not insofar as it is that which binds together [*Verknüpfende*] or indeed that which is bound together [*Verknüpfte*]. In this case, the identity would be merely a relational notion from which the former ought to be distinguished precisely because it is an *absolute* identity; i.e., its *essence* lies in itself and not in relation to conditional opposites. The identity, which in the first, categorical form is a mere negative and defines the Absolute only formally, thus becomes a positive in this hypothetical form and defines it qualitatively. To say that this definition has a relation to reflective cognition — insofar as it dissolves [*aufhebt*] the antithesis only through the affirmation of its opposite, as the first does through its negation — is quite correct; but are there not other possible definitions for which the same holds true? Spinoza let his notion of substance come to the fore all too frequently, which stamped him as a dogmatist because the only possible unmediated cognition of the Absolute in Spinoza was set aside — which he described clearly with the sentence: *Mens nostra quatenus se et corpus sub aeternitatis specie cognoscit, eatenus Dei cognitionem necessario habet, scitque se in Deo esse et per Deum concipi.** It was understood that by way of the intermediary of his definitions and descriptions one could arrive at the cognition of things that can only be perceived without mediation. Is it any different with the notions of infinity, indivisibility, or simplicity than with that of substance, or any other notion at

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* ["Our mind, as far as it knows itself and the body sub specie aeternitatis, has to that extent necessarily a knowledge of God, and understands itself to be in God and conceived through God." *Ethica,* part V, prop. XXX. B. de Spinoza, *Opera,* ed. J. Van Vloten and J.P.N. Land (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1914), vol. 2.]

hand, since most of them, by the mere fact of being composites, express that what they are meant to denote is to reflective cognition but a negative?

The third form by which reflective cognition tends to choose to express the Absolute is the *disjunctive*. This is known primarily through Spinoza. It is only One [*Eines*], but in the same manner this One can be regarded now as all-ideal, now as all-real; it arises from the combination of the categorical *and* the hypothetical. This one and the same — not at once but in like manner — can be regarded now as the one, now as the other; it is therefore in itself *neither* the one *nor* the other (according to the first form). Rather, it can be considered the combined *essence* or identity of both (according to the second form) and, in its independence from both, likewise under this attribute, now under that attribute.

This third form of expressing the Absolute has been the most prevalent in philosophy. The inventors of the so-called ontological proof of God's existence state that He is One — in consideration of the fact that thought also involves being, idea, and reality — but they do not mean to imply that in Him the ideal and the real are *bound together* [*verknüpft*] in such a way that He is both *at once*. God is the ideal par excellence, and without further mediation God is also the real par excellence. Rather than let God arise from the mixture of the ideal and the real, they let Him be each separately and wholly.

The identity of the ideal and the real that is not mediated but wholly unmediated, not external but internal, necessarily remains concealed from those lacking advanced scientific rigor since the real presupposes the realization that the absolute ideal, *without being assimilated into the real,* is *in-itself* also the absolute real.

Most curious, however, is the polemic against the absolute identity of thought and being as an expression of absoluteness by those who have made no advances in philosophy and indeed can only express themselves through notions of reflective cognition. If they mean to give a description of the Absolute, however, they can do no better than Spinoza who has written that the Absolute is that which exists only *through itself* and whose cause of *being* lies solely *in itself,* etc. This alone elucidates that the quarrel about the

definitions of the Absolute is but idle shadow-fencing [*Spiegelfechterei*] with a blunted épée that can strike the simpleminded but has no effect on the heart of the matter.

As manifestations of the Absolute through reflective cognition, all the possible forms of expressing the Absolute are after all completely equal. The essence *itself* of the Absolute, which as the ideal is also immediately real, cannot be known through explanations, only through intuition. Only a composite can be known through description. That which is simple demands to be intuited. Just as light could be described as ideal in relation to nature even to those who are blind from birth and have no knowledge of true light, so absoluteness as opposed to finiteness can be described in like manner and none other (without inferring, however, that the mentally blind could ever gain intuition of the true *nature* of absoluteness).

Insofar as this intuition cannot be compared to a universal geometrical figure but is particular to each soul like the perception of light in each eye, it is here a merely individual revelation; however, in this individuality there is also a *universal* revelation, just as light is for the empirical senses. This could be the point where, for the benefit of mutual further development, one might be able to unite Eschenmayer's propositions with the assertions of philosophy.

The only instrument befitting a subject such as the Absolute is a kind of cognition that is not added to the soul through instruction, teaching, etc. but is its true and eternal substance. For as the essence of God consists of absolute, solely unmediated reality, so the nature of the soul consists in cognition that is one with the real, ergo with God; hence it is also the intention of philosophy in relation to man not to add anything but to remove from him, as thoroughly as possible, the accidentals that the body, the world of appearances, and the sensate life have added and to lead him back to the originary state [*Ursprüngliche*]. Furthermore, all instruction in philosophy that precedes this cognition can only be negative; it shows the nullity of all finite opposites and leads the soul indirectly to the perception of the infinite. Once there, it is no longer in need of those makeshift devices [*Behelfe*] of negative descriptions of absoluteness and sets itself free from them.

In all dogmatic systems, as well as in the criticism and idealism of the theory of scientific knowledge [*Wissenschaftslehre*], there is talk of a reality of the Absolute that would be *outside of and independent from ideality.* In all these, unmediated cognition is therefore impossible because the in-itself, by way of the process of cognizance, becomes a product of the soul, a *mere* noumenon, and ceases to be in-itself.

In presupposing a merely mediated knowledge of the Absolute (irrespective of how the mediation occurs), the Absolute in philosophy can only appear as something that is presumed in order that it can be philosophized about; in fact, the opposite takes place, and all philosophizing begins, and has always begun, with the idea of the Absolute come alive. That which is true can only be recognized in truth; that which is evident, in evidence. But truth and evidence are clear in themselves and must therefore be absolute and of the essence of God. Until this was recognized, it was not even possible to conceive of the idea of that higher evidence, which is sought in philosophy. When, by way of tradition, the word and the name of philosophy reached those who lacked the inner impetus for such recognition — a recognition whose first beginnings were identical to those of philosophy itself — they attempted to philosophize without it.

Those who have experienced that evidence — which lies in and only in the idea of the Absolute and which any human language is too weak to describe — will regard as entirely incommensurate any attempts to reduce and confine it to the individuality of the individual [*das Individuelle des Individuums*] by way of faith, premonition, sentiment, or whatever one may call it. Not only will it not reach this evidence, but it will negate its very nature in the process.

The Origin of the Finite Things from the Absolute and Their Relationship to It

Here one might want to avail oneself of what Plato wrote to the tyrant of Syracuse: "But what kind of questions, O son of Dionysius and Doris, is the one you brought up: *What is the cause of all evil?* In fact, we are born with the thorn of this question stuck in our soul and he who does not pull it out, will never genuinely desire to partake in truth. However, in the garden, under the laurels, you told me that you found the answer and that it was a discovery of your own. I replied that if this were so, you would have saved me from many inquiries; also, I added, I had never met with any other person who had made this discovery; on the contrary, most of the trouble I had was about this very problem. That means that you had either, as is probable, overheard it from someone else, or had arrived at it by an act of the gods."*

In the aforementioned book Eschenmayer cites several passages from the *Zeitschrift*† and, among others, one specific passage from *Bruno*, where the question is postulated most decidedly in the following words: "You seem to be of the opinion, my dear fellow, that I arrive, sub specie aeternitatis, at the origin of actual consciousness, along with its detachment and separation, without presupposing anything other than the supreme idea."‡

Of course, Eschenmayer cannot see a satisfying answer in the immediately following passages; but why does he not cite the resolution laid down clearly and distinctly for the adept further down in various places? We will single out just one of them here: "First off, let us hold fast to what endures and to what we must posit to be immovable as against what we assume to be movable and changeable, for the soul never tires of returning to the contemplation of what is most excellent. *And then let us recall how everything that seems to come out of that oneness, or to tear itself away from it, has the* POSSIBILITY *of being for*

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* [Plato,] *Ep.* II [313*af*].

† [*Zeitschrift für speculative Physik* (Journal of Speculative Physics), edited by Schelling between 1800 and 1801 and continued as *Neue Zeitschrift für speculative Physik* (New Journal of Speculative Physics) in 1802.]

‡ [*Bruno*, *SW* 4:257.]

itself predetermined in this very oneness, and that the ACTUALITY *of it having a separate existence resides only* IN THE THING ITSELF. *This is merely an ideal circumstance, and even here it occurs only to the extent that any thing is capable of* BEING ONE WITH ITSELF *due to it having once been inside the Absolute."**

I will now attempt to fully lift the veil on this question, since even the recent expositions in the *Zeitschrift* have not yet pursued it into the only realm where its resolution can be given completely (that of Practical Philosophy).

We cannot yet move on to properly answer said question, however; doubts whose resolution must take precedence still stand in our way.

For the time being we presuppose only that without which everything that follows would remain uncomprehended: intellectual intuition. We posit this with certainty because there can be no dissimilarity or manifoldness inside it. Anyone who had to describe what he perceived in it could only describe it as *pure absoluteness, without any further determination.* We ask that the presence of this pure absoluteness without any other determination be preserved forever and is never again lost sight of.

Any further cognition is a result of this *originary* cognition and therefore separate from it.

Just as the nature of intellectual intuition — which is simple by definition and for which no other expression is available to us than that of absoluteness — is absoluteness, it cannot have being other than by its very notion (because if this were not the case, it would have to be determined by something other, outside of itself, which is impossible). It is therefore not *real* at all; rather, it is in itself only *ideal.* Equally eternal as the ideal-per-se [*schlechthin-Ideale*] is the *eternal form:* the ideal-per-se is not subjected to this form, for it is *itself* without all form, as surely as it is absolute; rather, this form is subjected to the eternal form, for it precedes it, not temporally but notionally.

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* *Bruno,* p. 131 [*SW* 4:282].

This form is such that the ideal-per-se is *immediately* also a *real — without egressing from its ideality.*

This *real* is now only a mere effect of the form, just as the form is an unmoving and calm [*stille und ruhige*] effect of the ideal, the simple-per-se. It does not intermix with the real, for while the latter is *the same* by its inherent nature, it is eternally *another* by its ideal determination. It is also not simple in the sense of the ideal, for it is the ideal represented in the real, although in it both are *one,* without difference.

The simple or inherent nature is neither the *effecting agent* [*Bewirkende*] nor the real-ground [*Realgrund*] of the form, and there is as little progression from one to the other as there is from the idea of a circle to its form (the equal distance of all points from its center). Here, nothing at all takes place in succession [*Nacheinander*]; rather, it happens as if by a single blow, all at once, even though, according to the ideal effect, one flows out of the other. The basic truth is this: the real is not real by itself insofar as it is determined by the ideal. Therefore the ideal is the *first* per se. As certain as it is that the ideal is the first, the *form of the determination of the real by the ideal* is the *second,* and the real is the *third.*

There could be little objection to calling sheer absoluteness, in its simple-per-se nature, *God* or the Absolute, and form, in contrast, *absoluteness,* since absoluteness, in its originary meaning, relates to form and is form. And since this could be assumed to be the purport of, among others, Eschenmayer, we might easily be in consensus about this. However, with this understanding, God could not be described as that which one can grasp only by premonition, sentiment, etc. For if the form of the determination of the real enters the soul through the ideal as *knowledge,* then the essence enters as the *in-itself of the soul* and is one with it so that the soul, sub specie aeternitatis, beholds the essence itself.

According to the aforementioned, we have to differentiate between the ideal-per-se, which hovers eternally above all that is real and never egresses from its eternalness, e.g., *God,* according to the just proposed designation; the *real*-per-se, which cannot be the true real of the former without becoming *another absolute,* only under a different guise; and that which acts as an *intermediary* between absoluteness and form. Form

can be described as a *self-recognition* [*Selbsterkennen*] insofar as the ideal becomes objectified in the real as an autonomous counter-image by virtue of the absoluteness; however, this self-recognition must not be regarded as a mere accident or attribute of the absolute-ideal but rather as a self-dependent absolute. For the Absolute cannot be the ideal-ground [*Idealgrund*] of anything that is not, like itself, absolute; just as, therefore, the real — wherein the ideal recognizes itself — must also be an independent absolute and does not mix with the ideal, which in its purity and sheer ideality subsists for itself.

This self-recognition of absoluteness has been understood as a coming out of itself, a splitting of itself into difference — a misinterpretation that must be corrected in order to answer the original question without creating further misunderstandings.

"Undoubtedly," says Eschenmayer, "all that is finite and infinite is merely a modification of the eternal. But what then determines these modifications, the splitting of itself into these differences? If this determining agent [*Bestimmende*] lies inside absolute identity, then it will apparently be clouded by that fact; if it lies outside of it, then self-recognition, the coming-out-of-itself, the splitting itself into difference, is for absolute identity *one and the same*." *

Setting aside this commixture of two entirely separate questions — whether it is possible for absoluteness to have self-recognition and how actual differences can originate from it (the cognizance of which would require something completely different) — we confine ourselves to the following question: In what way is this self-recognition to be understood as identity coming out of itself? Is it to be understood as difference posited between the subjective and the objective of this recognition whereby, therefore, the identity predicated upon the Absolute is sublated? However, the identity is only predicated upon the ideal-per-se, which in its pure identity is not sublated by becoming objectified in a real counter-image, just as the ideal-per-se cannot be in opposition to the latter since, according to the aforementioned, it does not mix with it and is not *at once* subject and object.

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* Eschenmayer, op. cit., p. 70.

Or does this coming-out-of-itself of identity lie in the fact that this self-recognition is to be thought of as an action [*Handlung*], which implies modification? Or as a transition from essence to form? The latter is not the case because form is as eternal as essence and as inseparable from it as absoluteness is from the idea of God. The former is not the case because form is an *entirely unmediated* expression of the ideal-per-se without any action or activity [*Thätigkeit*] on the part of the latter (when we call it an act [*Akt*], we speak of it in human terms); just as light emanates from the sun without the sun moving, so form emanates from essence, whose nature can only be expressed in terms of an activity that is itself motionless at the deepest rest [*eine Thätigkeit, die die tiefste Ruhe selbst ist*].* A misunderstanding occurs when a real succession [*Folge*], which modifies that from which it egresses, is confused with an ideal succession, which by definition can only be the case in the circumstances under discussion.

Furthermore, how is this self-recognition as a splitting of the Absolute into itself [*sich-selbst-Theilen*] to be regarded? Are we to envision the Absolute as a plant that propagates through offshoots? As one part of its essence becoming subject, another becoming object? Whoever understands it in this way must not have read or grasped the propositions made by the first philosophers on these matters. Where is this division supposed to take place? In the subject? But as ideal-per-se, the subject remains whole and undivided. In the object? But that is also the whole Absolute. Or, to repeat a frequently used example, does a thing *divide* by creating a

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* *Bruno*, p. 175 [*SW* 4:305: "Whoever could find an expression for an activity that is as motionless at the deepest rest, for a rest that is as active as the greatest activity, would somewhat approximate notionally the nature of supreme perfection." Cf. the notion of "at rest yet in motion" in Plato's *Parmenides* 146*a*: "Being of this nature, must the One then not be both at rest and in motion? — How? — The One is at rest because it is in itself. For by being in the One and by not passing out of it, it is in the same, in itself. — So it is indeed. — And that which is always in the same, must always be at rest. — Certainly. — But how? Must not, what is always in the Other, in contrast, never be in the same? And if it is never in the same, never be at rest, and if not at rest, be in motion? — So it is. — Therefore the One, being always both in itself and in the Other, must always be both at rest and in motion."]

mirror-image of itself? Is then one part of it in itself and another in the reflected image? Or is it not, in fact, impossible to think of a more perfect identity than the one between a thing and its reflected image, even though the two can never mix?*

Finally, to render proof of this becoming-difference of absolute identity in self-recognition, one could conclude: 'Thought of as the subjective, absolute identity is pure simplicity without any difference; in the objective or real, as its opposite, it therefore becomes necessarily nonidentity or difference.' Granting that this is true, the in-itself remains free of all difference, for only that *wherein* it becomes objective is difference, not it itself. As to this difference, it could only consist in the one and same identity becoming objective within particular forms; but these forms could only be the *ideas* since in them the universal, i.e., absoluteness, becomes one with the particular in such a way that neither the latter is cancelled by the former nor the former by the latter. However, the differences exist in the ideas only as possibilities, not as actual differences, for each idea is a universe in itself, and all ideas are but one Idea. Thus were one to understand this becoming-difference of the Absolute through self-recognition as an *actual* process, then it would not even take place in the counter-image of the Absolute and therefore even less in the Absolute itself; because if it differentiates, then it differentiates not in itself but in another, which is its real, and then not through itself but through the form that flows independently out of the abundance [*Fülle*] of its absoluteness without any effort on its part.

Having rendered these explanations, which undoubtedly will prove to anyone who is able to grasp absolute matters at all that the ideal-per-se subsists in pure identity in relation to form, we will turn to answering the question put forward at the outset.

The independent self-recognition of the ideal-per-se is an eternal transformation of pure ideality into reality: in this sense, and in no other, we will now approach this self-representation of the Absolute.

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* *Bruno*, p. 44 [*SW* 4:238].

All merely finite imagination [*Vorstellen*] is by nature only ideal; however, the representations of the Absolute are by nature real for it is that in view of which the ideal is real-per-se. Thus the Absolute does not become objectified through form in a merely ideal image of itself but rather in a counter-image that is itself a *truly other absolute.* It transfers its entire essentiality [*Wesenheit*] into the form by which it becomes an object. The autonomous producing [*Produciren*] of this other absolute is an imaginative forming [*Hineinbilden*] and beholding [*Hineinschauen*] of itself in the real, whereby it is independent and, like the first Absolute, subsists in itself. This is its one side: the oneness that, with respect to the ideas, we have denoted as the imaginative formation [*Einbildung*] of the infinite into the finite.*

Yet it is only absolute and autonomous in the self-objectification of the Absolute and therefore truly *in-itself* only insofar as it is simultaneously in the absolute form and thereby in the *Absolute:* this is its other, ideal or subjective, side.

Thus it is entirely real only to the extent that it is entirely ideal, and it is in its absoluteness one and the same — both of which can be regarded formally in exactly the same way.

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

The ideas, too, are necessarily productive in the same way; they, too, bring forth only absoluteness, only ideas, and each oneness that emerges from them relates to them in the

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* [On the considerable difficulties of rendering Schelling's notion of *Einbildung* into the English language, see above, p. XXII.]

same manner as they themselves relate to the originary oneness. This is the true transcendental theogony: there is no relation other than an absolute one in this realm, which the Old World knew to express only sensually through the image of procreation [*Zeugung*], whereby the procreated is dependent on the procreating but is otherwise independent.

The result of this continuous subject-objectification, which according to the *one* first law of the form of absoluteness stretches into infinity, is this: the absolute world with all its gradations of essence reduces itself to the absolute oneness of God so that in the former there is nothing truly particular and nothing that until now is not absolute, ideal, all soul, pure *natura naturans*.

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

The crudest explanation is arguably the one that attributes to the godhood an underlying random and disorderly matter, which, having been impregnated by the outgoing

effectuality with originary images of all things, gives birth to them and thereby attains an orderly constitution. Plato, the father of true philosophy, is named as one of the originators of said doctrine, which is a desecration of his name. A proper examination shows that this entire idea, like most of the common conceptions of Platonic philosophy, is drawn exclusively from the *Timaeus*, a work that because of its affinity to modern thinking is much easier to become familiar with than the true Platonic works, which are characterized by a high moral spirit, such as the *Phaedo* or the *Republic*, and opposed to realistic ideas about the origin of the phenomenal world. Indeed, the *Timaeus* is nothing but a marrying of the Platonic doctrine of intellectualism [*Intellektualismus*] with cosmogonic notions that prevailed prior to Plato and Socrates, whose commemorable works are praised precisely for having divorced philosophy forever from these cruder notions.

The inappropriateness of said combination is also illuminated by the works of the Neoplatonists, who demonstrated — by having purged entirely from their systems this alleged Platonic idea — that they had grasped the spirit of their forefather more purely and deeply than all of those coming after them. They explained matter as nothingness and called it *that which is not* (οὐκ ὄν), not allowing any direct relation or behavior between matter and the godhood or any outflowing of the same, such as the light of the divine essence being diffracted by or reflected in nothingness and the phenomenal world emerging from it. Such a crudely realistic imagination would have been as alien to their thinking, which was illumined by the light of idealism, as any kind of dualism. Just as the Parsi system of religion explains the mixture of the infinite and finite principles in the phenomenal world by assuming an incessant state of conflict between two primeval beings who only become separated from each other and into their own during the dissolution of all that is concrete (at the end of the world), so the primeval being opposed to the real is not a mere privation, a pure Nothing but rather a *principle* of nothingness and darkness, equal in power to the principle that in nature affects nothingness and in refraction beclouds light. However, nothing can be reflected in nothingness or beclouded by the same, and there can be

no evil principle or *principle* of nothingness before the highest good [*Allgut*], or everlasting with it, because the former is only a second-born, never a first-born.

Generally speaking, should not the many who, without vocation and driven by vain arrogance, venture to address this lofty question have already learned by the simplest of reflections that they are equally ignorant when they make the Absolute into a force that positively brings forth the finite world, or attribute to it an underlying negative aspect, irrespective of whether it is posited first as matter with infinite manifoldness of qualities, as mere empty indeterminateness after the manifoldness has been scrubbed [*abgebleicht*] out of it, or even as mere nothingness? Here, as in the first case, God is made the originator of evil. Matter as nothingness by no means possesses a positive character; it only takes it on, prior to becoming an evil principle, after the resplendence of that which is good comes into conflict with it. Some will surely argue that this conflict is not imposed by God yet acknowledge an originary effect or outflowing of God that is confined by an independent principle, hereby falling back on the most complete dualism.

In a word, there is no continuous transition from the Absolute to the actual; the origin of the phenomenal world is conceivable only as a complete falling-away from absoluteness by means of a leap [*Sprung*]. If philosophy were able to derive the origin of the actual world in a positive manner from the Absolute, then the Absolute would have its positive cause in the same; however, in God resides only the cause of the ideas, and only those produce other ideas. There is no positive effect coming out of the Absolute that creates a conduit or bridge between the infinite and the finite. Furthermore: philosophy has only a negative relation to phenomenal objects; since it demonstrates less the truth of their being than their nonbeing, how could it therefore ascribe to them a positive relationship to God? The absolute is the only actual; the finite world, by contrast, is not real. Its cause, therefore, cannot lie in an *impartation* [*Mittheilung*] of reality from the Absolute to the finite world or its substrate; it can only lie in a *remove* [*Entfernung*], in a *falling-away* [*Abfall*] from the Absolute.

This view, which is as evident as it is noble, also represents the true Platonic doctrine put forward in the aforementioned writings and carries most purely and distinctively the imprint of its founder's spirit. According to Plato, the soul can descend from its original state of beatitude and be borne into the temporal universe and thereby torn away from the truth only by means of a falling-away from the originary image [*Urbild*]. This was the tenet of the Greek mystery cult's secret teachings, to which Plato alluded quite explicitly: that the origin of the phenomenal world should not be imagined, as popular religion does, as a *creation,* as a positive emersion from the Absolute, but as a falling-away from it. Hereupon was founded its practical doctrine that the soul, the fallen divine essence in man, must be withdrawn from and purified of its relation and association with the flesh as much as possible so that by mortifying the sensate life the soul can regain absoluteness and again partake of the intuition of the originary image. This doctrine is inscribed on every page of the *Phaedo** and appears to have been symbolically prefigured in the Eleusinian mystery cults with the myth of Demeter and the Rape of Persephone.†

We now return to where we left off: that through the same steady and eternal effect of the form — through which the essentiality [*Wesenheit*] of the Absolute depicts itself in the object and forms itself imaginatively into it [*sich im Object ab-und ihm einbildet*] — the latter is, like the former, absolutely *in itself.* "He who formed the universe was good, and no envy can ever come out of goodness; being free from envy he desired that all things should be like himself as much as possible," as it is written in the figurative language of the *Timaeus.*‡ — The exclusive particularity of the Absolute

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* [Cf. Plato, *Phaedo* 66*b*–67*d*.]

† See *Kritisches Journal der Philosophie,* vol. 1, no. 3 [1802], pp. 24–25 ["Ueber das Verhältnis der Naturphilosophie zur Philosophie überhaupt (On the Relationship of the Philosophy of Nature to Philosophy in General)," *SW* 5: 123): "The purification, says Plato (*Phaedo,* p. 152 [67*c*–*d*]) consists in the most completely attainable separation of soul from the body and the habituation of it to collect and withdraw itself out of every part of the body and dwell as far as possible by itself. Such a release of the soul from the body is called death."]

‡ [Plato, *Timaeus* 29*e*.]

lies in the fact that when it bestows its essentiality upon its counter-image, it also bestows upon it its self-dependence. This being-in-and-for-itself, this particular and true reality of the first-intuited, is *freedom,* and from that first self-dependence outflows what in the phenomenal world appears as freedom, which represents the last trace and the seal [*Siegel*], as it were, of divinity in the fallen-away world. The counter-image, as an absolute entity and having all its attributes in common with the originary image, would not truly be in itself and absolute if it could not grasp itself in its selfhood [*Selbstheit*], in order to have true being as the *other* absolute. But it cannot be as the *other* absolute unless it separates itself or falls away from the true Absolute. For it is *truly* in itself and absolute only in the self-objectification of the Absolute, i.e., only insofar as it is simultaneously in the latter; this very relationship to the Absolute is one of *necessity.* It is free of the Absolute only in its absolute necessity. Therefore, by being its *own,* as a free entity, separate from necessity, it ceases to be free and becomes entangled in that necessity, which is the negation of absolute necessity, ergo purely finite.

What applies to the counter-image in this relationship necessarily applies to its immanent ideas: in its renunciation of necessity, freedom is the *true* Nothing and therefore cannot produce images of its own nullity, i.e., the phenomenal and actual world. The cause of the falling-away, and therefore also its activity of production, lies *not in the Absolute* but merely in the *real,* in the *intuited itself,* which must be regarded as fully autonomous and free. The cause of the *possibility* of the falling-away lies in freedom, and insofar as it is posited by the imaginative formation [*Einbildung*] of the absolute-ideal into the real, it also lies in the forms and thereby in the Absolute; but the cause of its *actuality* lies solely in the *fallen-away* itself, which produces the nothingness of the sensate world only *through and for itself.*

Since the unmediated real, in the Absolute, is also ideal and therefore *idea,* it necessarily, being purely *as such* within itself, can produce nothing but negations of absoluteness or negations of the idea once it is separated from the Absolute. Since as unmediated reality it is also ideality, what is produced is a reality that, separated from ideality, is not directly

determined by it. It is a reality that does not have the complete possibility of its being in itself but rather *outside of itself;* thus it is a sensate, conditional actuality.

The *producing* agent [*Producirende*] continues to be the *idea,* which is the *soul* insofar as it is destined to produce finiteness and to intuit itself in it. That wherein it becomes objective is no longer the real but rather a pseudo-image [*Scheinbild*] — a produced reality that is not in itself real but real in relation to the soul and even then only insofar as it has fallen away from the originary image [*Urbild*].

To the extent that the sensate world is the self-objectification of the Absolute in the form — whereby the counter-image can exist in itself and remove itself from the originary image — it has a relation to the Absolute, albeit an indirect one. Thus the origin of the finite world cannot be traced directly to the infinite world but must be understood within the principle of causation, which itself is infinite and therefore has only a negative significance: *no finite thing can directly originate from the Absolute or be traced back to it,* whereby the cause of the finite world is expressed as an absolute breaking-away from the infinite world.

This falling-away is as eternal (outside of time) as the Absolute and the world of ideas [*Ideenwelt*]. The latter, as ideality, is eternally being borne into another absolute as reality, and as this other absolute, as originary idea [*Uridee*], it is necessarily double-sided (whereby it is both in itself [*in sich selbst*] and in the in-itself [*im An-sich*]). Likewise, the originary idea, and all of its innate ideas, is given a double life: one is in itself yet bound to finitude and is, insofar as it is separated from the other life, a pseudo-life [*Scheinleben*]; the other is in the Absolute, which is its true life. Irrespective of this eternal character of the falling-away and the sensate universe that follows from it, both are merely accidental with regards to the Absolute, for the cause of the falling-away lies neither in the one nor the other but rather in the idea seen under the aspect of its selfhood. The falling-away is extra-essential [*außerwesentlich*] for the Absolute as well as for the originary image because it does not affect either one since the fallen world is thereby immediately brought into nothingness. In view of the Absolute and the originary image, it is the true *Nothing* and is only *for itself.*

Neither can the falling-away be *explained* (so to speak) because it is absolute and descends from absoluteness, even though its consequence and its necessarily entrained predicament [*Verhängnis*] is nonabsoluteness. For the self-dependence, which the *other absolute* gains in the self-intuition of the first, the form, only goes as far as the *possibility* of the real being-within-itself but no further; beyond that boundary lies the penalty, which consists in becoming entangled with finitude.

Of the newer philosophers, no one argues this point more clearly than Fichte, when he posits the principle of finite consciousness in an *active* deed [*That-Handlung*] rather than a matter of *fact* [*That-Sache*].* Few of his contemporaries have been able to use this insight for their own enlightenment.

On its pass through finitude, the being-for-itself of the counter-image expresses itself most potently as "I-ness" [*Ichheit*], as self-identical individuality. Just as a planet in its orbit no sooner reaches its farthest distance from the center than it returns to its closest proximity, so the point of the farthest distance from God, the I-ness, is also the moment of its return to the Absolute, of the re-absorption into the ideal.† The I-ness is the general principle of finitude. The soul discerns in all things an impression of this principle. The being-within-itself is expressed in inorganic bodies as rigidity, and the imaginative formation of identity into difference or ensoulment as magnetism. The celestial bodies, the unmediated pseudo-images of the idea, have their I-ness in the centrifugal force. Where the originary oneness, the first counter-image,

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* [Fichte's term *That-Handlung* combines *Thatsache* (matter of fact) and *Handlung* (action) to convey an originary productive deed that is directed at itself rather than outside.]

† [Cf. Schelling's use of the periapsis and apoapsis in a planetary orbit as an analogy for the continuous receding of all things from absolute oneness into difference and returning to it in *Bruno*, *SW* 4.271: "In this way it happens that the planets move within self-reverting lines that are like circles, yet are not described around one center but two separate, reciprocally balanced focal points: one is the shining image of absolute oneness and identity; the other, the idea of it insofar as it expresses the absolute and self-dependent universe, so that in this difference can be recognized the oneness and identity and the individual fate of each planet as particular beings to be absolute, and as absolute beings to be particular."]

falls into the imaged world, it appears as reason, for form, as the essence of knowledge, is originary knowledge [*Urwissen*], originary reason [*Urvernunft*] (λόγος); however, the real, as its product, is identical with the producing agent; it is real reason, and, as fallen reason, it is *common sense* [*Verstand*] (νοῦς).* Just as the originary oneness begets all of its innate ideas out of itself, so common sense produces that which correspond to those ideas merely out of itself. Reason and I-ness, in their *true* absoluteness, are one and the same, and if for the reflected world this is the pinnacle of its being-for-itself, then it is also the point where the fallen world restores itself to the original — where those otherworldly powers, the ideas, become reconciled and descend into temporality through science, art, and the moral actions of men. The ultimate goal of the universe and its history is nothing other than the complete reconciliation [*Versöhnung*] with and re-absorption [*Wiederauflösung*] into the Absolute.

The importance of a philosophy that makes the principle of the Fall of Man, in its most universal articulation, its own principle, albeit unconsciously, cannot be emphasized enough in the context of the aforementioned dogmatic admixture of ideas with concepts of finitude. It is true that as a principle of all science, it can only result in a negative philosophy, but much is already gained by having the negative, the realm of nothingness, separated from the positive realm of reality by an incisive boundary since the former could only emanate from it after this separation. Whoever holds that good can be recognized without evil commits the greatest of all errors, for in philosophy, as in Dante's poem, the path toward heaven leads through the abyss [*Abgrund*].

Fichte says that the I-ness is *its own deed* [*That*], its own action [*Handeln*]; it is *nothing* apart from this activity, and it is merely *for-itself,* not *in*-itself. That the cause of all of finite

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* [On the relationship between *Vernunft* (reason) and *Verstand* (understanding or common sense), see Schelling's 1810 *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen* (Stuttgart Private Lectures): "Usually, a distinction is postulated between common sense and reason. Yet this is entirely erroneous, for common sense and reason are the same thing, albeit considered from different perspectives... Common sense appears to be more active, more practical, whereas reason seems more passive, more yielding... Reason is nothing but common sense yielding to the highest principle, the soul" (*SW* 7:472).]

things is merely residing in finitude and not in the Absolute could not have been expressed in clearer words. How purely the ancient doctrine of true philosophy argues for the nothingness of the I-ness as the principle of the world, and what a contrast to unphilosophy [*Unphilosophie*],* which shudders at the thought of this nothingness and strives to locate its reality within a substrate that is affected by infinite intellect, within formless matter, or substance!

Let us pursue — without claiming to be exhaustive — some of the ramifications of this principle as it extends into nature.

The visible universe is not dependent because it has a beginning in time but rather by virtue of its nature or *concept.* It genuinely has neither begun nor not begun, for it is a mere nonbeing, and a nonbeing can no more come into being as not come into being.

The soul, becoming aware of its falling-away, nonetheless strives to become another absolute and thus to produce absoluteness. But its predicament is that it can only produce that which was (as *idea*) *ideal* within it, as *real* — that is, as negation of the ideal. The soul therefore produces particular and finite things. It strives to express the complete idea according to both of its unitive modes [*Einheiten*] — and even all of the various degrees of ideas, as much as possible in each of these pseudo-images — by taking this attribute from one idea and that from another so that the sum of all that is produced equals a complete reproduction of the true universe. In this way, the soul also brings about the various potencies of things by gradually (now expressing the whole idea in the real, now

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* [The term *unphilosophy,* while awkward, conveys best a sense of active opposition. Cf. the introduction to the first volume of the *Kritisches Journal,* authored jointly by Schelling and Hegel: "Criticism parts unphilosophy from philosophy; it stands on the one side and has unphilosophy on the opposite side. Since unphilosophy takes up a negative attitude to philosophy, there can be no talk of discussing it as philosophy. There is nothing to be done but to recount how this negative side expresses itself and confesses its nonbeing, which appears as platitude." "Ueber das Wesen der philosophischen Kritik überhaupt, und ihr Verhältnis zum gegenwärtigen Zustand der Philosophie insbesondere (On the Essence of Philosophical Criticism Generally, and its Relationship to the Present State of Philosophy in Particular)," *Kritisches Journal der Philosophie,* vol. 1, no. 1 (1802), pp. vi–vii.]

in the ideal) raising itself up to the originary oneness. But from the perspective of the soul's selfness, the entanglement with necessity — which unfurls in the *natura naturata,*° the general scene of the birth of finite and sensate things — is indissoluble. Only by surrendering its selfness and returning to its ideal oneness will it once again arrive at intuiting the divine and producing absoluteness.

In their ideality, the two unitive modes of the idea (the being-within-itself and the being-within-the-Absolute) form *one* unity [*Eine Einheit*], and the idea is therefore absolute oneness. In falling-away, it becomes *two,* i.e., difference, and during the process of production, the one unity necessarily becomes *three,* for an image of the in-itself can be produced only by subordinating the two unitive modes as mere attributes. The being-within-itself, separated from the other unitive mode, involves being immediately in the difference between reality and its possibility (the negation of true being); the general form of this difference is *time,* since any thing that has the complete possibility of being in an other rather than in itself is temporal, and therefore time is the principle and necessary form of all that is nonessential. The producing agent, which seeks to integrate the form of selfness with the other form, makes time into an attribute, a form of the substance (of the produced real), and expresses it through the first dimension, that of length. For the line is time extinct in *space.*† Like the first unitive mode — the imaginative formation [*Einbildung*] of identity into difference — the other is necessarily a reverse formation [*Zurückbildung*] of difference into identity, with difference as

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° [For Spinoza, the *natura naturata,* natured nature, signified "the modes or creations that depend on or have been created directly by God." (*Korte Verhandlung van God,* part I, chap. 9, in B. de Spinoza, *Opera,* vol. 4)]

† [Cf. the more elaborate exposition in Schelling's *System der gesammten Philosophie und der Naturphilosophie insbesondere* (System of Philosophy in General and of the Philosophy of Nature in Particular, 1804): "That the line is time as it is formed into space, quasi time extinct in space [*im Raum gleichsam erloschene Zeit*], is evident already from the following: Time is the imaginative formation [*Einbildung*] of identity into difference, whereby it looses its own life and is subjugated under the whole, but this is precisely the case with the line, where a difference, a being-apart may be posited, yet this difference is penetrated by a dominating, singularity-negating identity." (*SW* 6: 223)]

its starting point. The latter, which in contrast to identity can manifest itself only as pure negation, is represented by the *point,* for it is the negation of all reality. The dissolution of identity into difference — which expresses itself for the soul in an absolute disparateness wherein nothing is one with any other — can only be lifted by positing difference as *pure negation.* Identity is then posited so that in its absolute disparateness no point is essentially different from any other. Each is completely similar and equal to the next; one is contingent on all and all on one, as is the case in absolute space.

Space subsumes time; this occurs in the first dimension just as time also subsumes space and, albeit subordinated to its dominant dimension (the first), subsumes all the others. The dominant dimension of space is the second dimension, the image of ideal oneness; it is in time as the past, which like space, is for the soul a completed image wherein it intuits differences as having receded, having been re-absorbed into identity. The real oneness, as such, intuits them in the future because through the future all things are projected for it and assume their selfness. Indifference [*Indifferenz*], or the third unitive mode, is shared by both counter-images, for the present time is to them a similar likeness of the absolute nothingness of finite things (since, like the calm depth of space, the soul is never aware of it).

Meanwhile, as said before, the producing agent seeks to make the produced as similar to the idea as possible. Just as the absolute universe has all of time within itself as possibility (but none outside), the producing agent strives to subjugate time to the third unitive mode and to tether it to that other mode. But since the soul cannot return to the absolute thesis, the absolute firstness, it produces only a synthesis, or thirdness, whereby both modes do not stand in the Absolute unclouded [*ungetrübt*], as one and the same, as a nonaddition, but rather as an insurmountable secondness.* The produced is therefore an intermediary [*Mittelwesen*] that takes

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* Cf. Charles Sanders Peirce's notion of secondness as *haecceitas,* which he described as the "shock" of experiencing the "brutal fact" of the Other: "We are constantly bumping against hard fact." *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce,* ed. C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 1960), 1:324.

part equally in the nature of firstness and secondness, the principles of good and evil, wherein both unitive modes, by running into each other [*sich durch-kreuzend*], become clouded and bring about an impenetrable pseudo-image or idol of the one true reality.

Matter belongs altogether to the category of nonbeing insofar as it is nothing other than the negation of evidence, of the complete absorption of reality in ideality. Viewed in itself and independent from the soul, of which it is a mere idol (simulacrum), matter is complete nothingness. In its disparateness from the soul, it resembles the shadow-images of Hades as described by the wisdom of the Greeks, where even the mighty Heracles hovers only as a phantom (εἴδωλον) while *he himself* tarries among the immortal gods.*

To the extent that the soul, with regard to its selfness or finitude, cognizes true nature only through this intermediary, as if through a clouded mirror, all finite cognizance is necessarily irrational; to the objects in themselves, it has an indirect relationship that cannot be dissolved by sameness.

The question of the origin of matter is one of the most mysterious in philosophy. So far, no dogmatic philosophy has overcome the alternatives of considering it as either independent from God, as another elementary being [*Grundwesen*] opposed to Him, or as dependent from God and thereby making God Himself the originator of privation, limitations, and its resulting evils. Even *Leibniz* — who, understood correctly, deduced matter merely from the concept of monads, which if they are adequate, involve only *God* and if they are muddled [*verworren*], involve the *sensate things* — could not help but justify and, as it were, defend God's supposed sanctioning of evil because he could not explain these muddled ideas and their associated deprivations and moral evils.

The old, sacred doctrine puts an end to all those Gordian Knots [*Zweifelsknoten*] that have exhausted reason for millennia. It says that souls descend from the world of intellect into the sensate world, where they find themselves tethered to a physical body, as if incarcerated, as a penalty for their selfness and for offenses committed prior (ideally, not temporally) to

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* [Homer,] *Odyssey* 9.601–3.

this life. While they bring along the memory of the unison and harmony of the one *true* universe, their apprehension of it is distorted by the cacophony and dissonance of the senses just as they are unable to recognize truth in what *is*, or what appears to be, but only in what (for them) *was* and in that to which they strive to return — the life of the intellect.

But the contradictions in which reason and realist thinking become necessarily entangled are no less resolved by this doctrine. For if we ask, for example, whether the universe expands infinitely or is finite, the answer is neither because just as nonbeing cannot be limited, it cannot be unlimited since nonbeing can have no predicates. But if the question is whether the universe is this or that insofar as it has an apparent reality, then the question really is whether one or the other of two predicates can be assigned to it in the same sense in which reality is assigned to it, namely in concept and idea only, whereby one again cannot be at a loss for the answer.

We will now briefly outline the further consequences of this doctrine for the Philosophy of Nature.

After it is plunged into finitude, the soul can no longer behold the originary images in their true form, only in a form clouded by matter. Nonetheless, it still sees in them their original nature and recognizes them as universals [*Universa*], and while it sees them differentiated and apart from each other, it does not see them merely as independent from each other but also as self-dependent. Just as for the finite souls, the ideas appear in the celestial bodies as their unmediated reflections [*Abbilder*], so the ideas that preside over their corresponding celestial bodies are linked to organic bodies whereby the harmony between both is apprehended. As reflections of the originary ideas, and thus the first fallen-away beings, the stars represent the principle of good more directly because they create their own light in the darkness of the fallen-away world, and they disseminate this light, the outflowing of eternal beauty, in nature. For they are the least removed from the originary images and take on the least corporeality, and they relate to the dark celestial bodies [the planets] as the ideas relate to the stars, namely, like orbital centers wherein they inhere as the other and at the same time as themselves.

Motion ensues from the concordance between them, as has been discussed elsewhere.*

As God passes into objectivity in the first counter-image by an act of self-intuition, by way of the form, thereby creating a complete simile of Himself, so the soul, too, projects itself by an act of self-intuition into nature, in the *light,* which is the spirit that resides in nature merely in a ruinous state. For even though it is completely separated from the ideal principles, the world of appearances is for the soul just the relics of the divine or absolute world; it is absoluteness only in its *intuited* form, not the ideal-per-se, and then clouded by difference and finitude. From this is to be understood how Spinoza arrives at the strict dictum that *Deus est res extensa.*† He does not, however, go as far as to consider God an extension only insofar as He is the same *essence* or *in-itself* of thinking and extension whereby that which *is* extended in extension and negated in negation is the *essence* of God. But which philosopher would want to contradict the fact that what is *negated* in the sensate and extended world is therefore the in-itself and divine?

Only complete ignorance and imbecility could account for the fact that the *Philosophy of Nature* has been accused first of materialism, then of the identification of God with the phenomenal world, and subsequently of pantheism (and whatever other names the simple-minded, without much contemplation, avail themselves of for their attacks), had not some of the same accusers themselves belonged to one or the other category. For (1) it is the Philosophy of Nature that has

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* [Cf. *Bruno, SW* 4:269–70: "In the celestial spheres, that whereby things separate and distance themselves from the reflection (*Abbild*) of their oneness is not divorced from that whereby they are assimilated into the infinite concept. They are not split up into contending forces but are harmoniously entangled, so that they alone enjoy the blessed state of the universe, even in the state of separate existence... I think of the motion of celestial bodies as something whole and simple, not as a composite but as absolute oneness. One aspect of this oneness causes a thing to inhere within this absolute oneness as a whole; it is commonly called gravity. The other causes it to inhere in itself as individual; we commonly view this as the opposite of gravity. But both completely equivalent aspects of the same oneness; they are, in fact, the same: One."]

† ["God is a thinking and extended thing," Spinoza, *Ethica,* part II, prop. I and II: in *Opera,* vol. 2.]

demonstrated most clearly the absolute nonreality of all apparitions [*Erscheinungen*] and stated the laws that, according to Kant, articulate its possibility — "that they are instead genuine expressions of their absolute nullity and nonessentiality by testifying to a being outside of absolute oneness, a being that is in itself a nothing";* (2) it has demanded "the absolute separation of the phenomenal world from reality-per-se" as an essential condition for the cognition of true philosophy "because only thereby is the former posited as *absolute nonreality*; any other relationship, however, to the Absolute would bestow upon it some form of reality";† (3) the *I-ness*, as the actual point of separation and transition of the particular forms from oneness, has been posited as the true principle of finitude and shown to be only its *own deed* [*eigne That*] and independent from its action [*Handeln*] to be truly *nothingness*,‡ just as finitude, which is separated from the whole *with* the I-ness and only *for it* — a nothingness, by the way, that has been asserted consistently by the true philosophers throughout history, albeit in various forms.

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* *Neue Zeitschrift für spekulative Physik*, vol. 1, no. 2 [1802], p. 11 ["Fernere Darstellungen aus dem System der Philosophie (Further Presentations from the System of Philosophy)," *SW* 4: 397. Schelling's is paraphrasing himself here].

† *Neue Zeitschrift für spekulative Physik*, vol. 1, no. 1 [1802], p. 73 ["Fernere Darstellungen aus dem System der Philosophie," *SW* 4: 388].

‡ See, apart from numerous passages in *Bruno*, the [*Neue*] *Zeitschrift*, vol. 1, no. 2 [1802], p. 13 ["Fernere Darstellungen aus dem System der Philosophie," *SW* 4: 398] and *Kritisches Journal der Philosophie*, vol. 1, no. 1 [1802], p. 13 ["Über das absolute Identitäts-System und sein Verhältnis zu dem neuesten (Reinholdischen) Dualismus (On the Absolute System of Identity and its Relation to the Newest (Reinholdian) Dualism), *SW* 5: 26].

Freedom, Morality, and Beatitude: The Final Cause and the Beginning of History

"It always seemed to me an irresolvable problem to deduce free will, which carries in it all the traces of having originated from beyond the Absolute, out of absolute identity, or even absolute cognizance," says Eschenmayer.* And again: "As much as it is true that all oppositions of the cognitive realm are abolished in the absolute identity, as little it is possible to transcend the main opposition of *this world* to the *beyond*."†

If by "this world" is meant the phenomenal world and the realm of finite cognizance, then Eschenmayer can find a complete confirmation of his opposition in our aforementioned proposition regarding the absolute differentiation of both, the world of apparitions and the absolute world. If, however, he is implying here that the Absolute itself has a beyond and that this world can be described as the "gravitational force of free will, which during cognizance is fettered to finitude,"‡ then Eschenmayer clearly has a completely different concept of the Absolute. What this might be, I do not know since, as said before, it strikes me as an immediate contradiction to look for anything at all beyond the Absolute.

Were this high-spirited explorer to make clear to himself for what reason in his imagination the Absolute has sunk into insignificance, perhaps he would realize that this higher principle — to which he wants to hold fast through faith in a beyond he calls the Absolute — is the same absoluteness that we possess in clear knowledge and in the equally clear consciousness of this knowledge.

Or, did he not ignite with *this* absoluteness the light that seems to want to break through in his concept when he says that the divine spark of freedom, which imparts itself from the invisible world onto ours, *breaks through absolute identity* and only then — in accordance with its distribution — originates

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* Eschenmayer, op. cit., p. 51f.

† Ibid., p. 54.

‡ Ibid.

thinking and being on the one side and free will and action on the other?*

We conceive of knowledge as an imaginative formation of infinitude into the soul as a finite or object, which thereby is autonomous and relates to it in the same way as the first counter-image relates to divine intuition. In reason the soul dissolves into originary oneness and becomes equal to it. It is hereby given the *possibility* to become fully in itself as well as fully in the Absolute.

The cause of the *actuality* of one thing or another no longer lies in the originary oneness (to which the soul relates in the same way as the latter relates to the Absolute) but entirely in the *soul itself,* which therefore gains the possibility of either restoring itself into absoluteness or of falling anew into non-absoluteness and separating itself from the originary image.

This relationship of possibility and actuality is the cause of the manifestation of freedom; however, it is *inexplicable* because it is notionally determined only by itself: yet its first point of departure, from which it flows into the phenomenal world, can and must be revealed all the same.

Just as the soul's being in the originary oneness, and therefore in God, is for it not a real necessity but rather cannot reside in it without being at once truly within-itself and absolute, so it is in turn incapable of being truly free without also being in infinitude, that is, without also being necessary. The soul, which subordinates its infinite part to finitude by apprehending itself in selfhood, thereby falls away from the originary image. The immediate penalty, which follows as its predicament, is that the positive aspect of being-within-itself becomes negative; it is no longer capable of producing anything absolute and eternal but rather can only produce nonabsolute and temporal things. Just as freedom attests to the first absoluteness of all things, and hence becomes the repeated possibility of the falling-away, so empirical necessity is precisely the fallen side of freedom, the compulsion into which it finds itself through its distancing from the original image.

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* Ibid., p. 90.

How the soul, on the other hand, evades finite necessity through identity with infinitude will be illuminated by the relationship of finite necessity to absolute necessity.

In its finite producing, the soul is merely an instrument of eternal necessity, just as the produced things are merely instruments of the ideas. But the Absolute's relationship to the finite soul is now only an indirect and irrational one, so the things do not spring directly from the eternal but rather from each other, and the soul, being identical with that which is produced, is therefore in the very same state of utmost darkening [*höchster Verfinsterung*] as that of nature. In its identity with infinity, on the other hand, the soul rises above necessity (which strives against freedom) toward absolute freedom wherein the real, which in the cycle of nature appears independent from freedom, is also posited in harmony with it.

Religion, as cognition of the ideal-per-se, does not follow these notions but rather precedes them and is their cause. For to cognize *absolute* identity, which is only in God, and to cognize that it is independent of acting [*Handeln*] as the essence or in-itself of all acting, is the first cause of morality. To those whom the identity of necessity and freedom appears according to their indirect yet sublime relationship to the world, absolute identity appears as *fate* [*Schicksal*], the cognition of which is therefore the first step toward morality. In the conscious reconciliation with absolute identity the soul recognizes it as *providence* [*Vorsehung*] — no longer from the standpoint of its appearance as an uncomprehended and incomprehensible identity but as *God* whose nature is as immediately visible and apparent to the spiritual eye as light is to the sensate eye.

The reality of God is not just a postulation made by morality; rather, only he who recognizes God — in whatever way — is a truly moral person. Moral laws ought to be obeyed not because they are related to God as the lawmaker (or whatever other relationship the finite mind is able to conceive) but because the essence of God and that of morality are one and the same and because by acting morally we are revealing the essence of God. A moral world exists only if God exists, and to postulate His existence *in order for* a moral world to exist is a complete reversal of the true and necessary relations.

It is one and the same spirit that teaches us to sacrifice finite freedom in order to attain infinite freedom and to die to the sensate world in order to make the spiritual world our home. A philosophy that excludes the essence of morality would thus be as impossible as morality or a moral doctrine without the intuition of ideas.

Eschenmayer writes: "*Schelling* did not clearly and explicitly touch upon the intelligible pole or the community of rational beings that constitutes a necessary component of our rational system in any of his writings *and has* THEREBY EXCLUDED *from reason virtue as one of the principle ideas* [*Grundideen*]."*

It is one thing when nonscientific platitude, because of its own nullity, takes revenge on philosophy by accusing it, with heartbreaking utterances, of not being moral, or when another, in preachy malicious manner, tries to vent his narrow-mindedness with easy judgments. But when *Eschenmayer* is unfortunate to lapse into adopting the same tone, he only contradicts himself. For how can he accuse Fichte's system and then concede to the very system that it is a philosophy that now leaves nothing to be desired for, that with it the bright day of science has dawned, and so on?† Or does the idea of virtue, according to him, belong in the realm of nonphilosophy? And does a system of philosophy that excludes virtue downright not leave something to be desired? And now to the reasoning! Because the author does not explicitly and clearly touch upon the moral community of rational beings in his writings (that is, *not touch* upon them in this manner), he *positively excludes* the idea of virtue (there is no other way to explain this passage) — excludes it in a system that treats all ideas as one, that peculiarly represents everything within the potency of the eternal,‡ wherein, according to *Eschenmayer*, "virtue alone is also true and beautiful, truth is virtuous and beautiful, and beauty is wedded to virtue and truth."§ Where now is in this identity the exclusion of any one idea supposed to come from?

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* Eschenmayer, op. cit, par. 86.

† Ibid., preliminary remarks and p. 17.

‡ Ibid., p. 17.

§ Ibid., p. 92.

'This all sounds splendid,' some may now say, 'we are saying more or less the same (they say it because it is a prevalent formula that is familiar to them), *but we are thinking about something altogether different.*'

We will therefore openly admit and say in no uncertain terms: Yes! We believe in a higher principle than *your* virtue and the kind of morality *you* speak of so paltrily and without much conviction. We believe that there is no imperative or reward for virtue for the soul because it simply acts according to the necessity of its inherent nature. The moral imperative expresses itself in an ought [*Sollen*] and presupposes the concept of evil next to that of the good. To preserve evil (for this is, according to the preceding, the cause of your sensate existence), you would rather conceive of virtue as a subjugation than as absolute freedom. You can see that morality understood in this sense cannot be the highest principle already from that which for you accompanies morality as its opposite: beatitude [*Seligkeit*]. It cannot be the destiny of rational beings to succumb to moral laws like single bodies succumb to gravity because of the following difference: the soul is only truly moral if it is so with absolute freedom, e.g., if, for it, morality is also absolute beatitude. Just as true immorality is being or feeling unhappy, so beatitude is not accidental to virtue but is virtue itself. Absolute morality is not a dependent; it means to live freely within lawfulness. Just as an idea — and its reflection, the celestial body — absorbs its center, identity, and at once resides within it, and vice versa, so also the soul; its inclination toward the center, to be one with God, is morality. This would only be a negative difference, were it not for the fact that this resumption of finitude into infinitude is also a passage of the infinite into the finite, e.g., a complete being-within-itself of the latter. Thus morality and beatitude are but two different sides of the same oneness; in no need of being complemented by the other, each is absolute and comprehends the other. The originary image of this being-one [*Eins-Seins*], which is that of both truth and beauty, is in *God*.

God is absolute beatitude and absolute morality in a completely equivalent manner — both are equally infinite attributes of God — for a morality that is not necessarily emanating from the eternal laws of His nature (e.g., that is not also

absolute happiness) is unthinkable. And beatitude, in turn, is founded in view of God in absolute necessity and, in this respect, in absolute morality. In Him, subject and object, the particular and the universal, are identical. He is one and the same, whether viewed from the aspect of necessity or from that of freedom.

Nature is the image of God's beatitude, and the ideal world that of God's holiness, albeit an incomplete image disrupted by difference.

God is the selfsame in-itself of necessity and freedom; for the negation whereby necessity appears to the infinite soul independent from and counter to freedom disappears in Him. But He is the selfsame essence of freedom and necessity, the separation into individual rational beings, and the unification of all into a whole not only in relation to each individual soul that arrives through morality — wherein it expresses the same harmony — at a reunification with Him but also categorically. God is therefore the *unmediated* in-itself of history since He is the in-itself of nature only through the mediation of the soul. Since in action [*Handeln*], the real — necessity — appears independent from the soul, its accord and discord with freedom is not to be understood out of the soul itself but appears at all times as an unmediated manifestation or reaction of the invisible world. Since God is the *absolute* harmony of necessity and freedom, and this harmony cannot be revealed in individual destinies but only in history as a whole, only history as a whole is a revelation of God — and then only a progressively evolving revelation.

Although history represents only one side of the destinies of the universe, it is not to be conceived of as partial but rather as symbolic of those destinies that repeat themselves in their entirety and are clearly reflected in it.

History is an epic composed in the mind of God. It has two main parts: one depicting mankind's egress from its center to its farthest point of displacement; the other, its return. The former is, as it were, history's *Iliad;* the latter, its *Odyssey*. In the one, the direction is centrifugal; in the other, it becomes centripetal. In this way, the grand purpose of the phenomenal world reveals itself in history. The ideas, the spirits, must fall away from their center and insert themselves into the

particularity of nature, the general realm of the falling-away, so that afterward, and as a particularities, they may return to indifference and, reconciled with it, may be able to abide in it without disturbing it.

Before we expand on this final cause of history and all of the phenomenal world, we must look back to an issue that traditionally only religion has taught and that so absorbs humankind — the question of the first beginnings of education [*Erziehung*]: the origin of the arts, sciences, and civilization as a whole. Philosophy seeks to disperse the light of truth also in the boundless dark space that mythology and religion filled with poetic fabulations [*Dichtungen*]. Experience speaks loudly of the need of the human race for edification [*Bildung*] and habituation [*Gewöhnung*] in order to wake up to reason and of how the lack thereof allows only animal dispositions and instincts to develop. Consequently, it does not seem possible that the human race could have risen above bestiality and instinct to reason and freedom on its own accord. Likewise, left to chance, edification would have parted into different directions and that which one encounters in the originary world [*Urwelt*], the probable birthplace of humanity, would have become completely incomprehensible. All of history points to a common origin of the arts, science, religion, and legislation: the glimpses of the furthest boundary of our known history show a civilization that has fallen from its erstwhile height; the garbled remains of its science have long since become meaningless symbols.

According to these premises, it can safely be assumed that the present human race — wherein reason exists only as possibility, not as actuality (unless it is educated) — has enjoyed the teachings of a higher order of beings and possesses its culture and science through tradition and the teachings of an earlier race. It is the deeper potential or residue of this earlier race, which partook of reason unmediated and through itself and — after having sown the divine seed of ideas, the arts and the sciences — has disappeared from earth. If, according to the gradated character of the world of ideas, the idea of Man was preceded by a higher order from which the latter was brought into being, then, according to the harmony between the visible and the invisible worlds, these same originary

beings [*Urwesen*] — the spiritual progenitors of mankind's first birth — became, after its second birth, its first educators and guides toward rational life [*Vernunftleben*] whereby mankind restores itself to a more perfect life.

If we had any doubts about how this spiritual race could have descended into earthly bodies, we would become convinced that the earth's earlier nature lived in harmony with forms of nobler and higher order than our current ones by the remains of animal creatures of which equivalents can no longer be found in nature and whose size and structure far exceed those existing today — proof of how this earlier nature in the youth of its powers has borne higher specimens and more perfect species also in other living beings, which met their demise in the changing conditions on earth. The gradual deterioration of earth is not only a myth of the prehistoric world [*Vorwelt*] but just as much a physical truth as the inclination of the earth's axis, which came to pass later in earth's history. The evil principle spread proportionally with earth's growing solidification, and the earlier identity with the sun, which promoted the birth of the more beautiful things on earth, disappeared.

We would like to imagine this higher race — the identity from which the human race evolved — as one that unites by nature and in innocent splendor what is refracted into individual rays and colors and is connected by the second race merely with consciousness. That state of unconscious, natural happiness, the original placidness of earth, has been preserved by the legends of all peoples in the myth of the Golden Age, wherein the second human race immortalized the guardian spirits of its childhood in the images of those heroes and gods with whom, according to its earliest and oldest peoples, its history began. These tutelary spirits protected the human race when instinct compelled it to walk upright in advance against the future harshness of nature by bestowing upon it the first practical arts and the seeds of science, religion, and the principles of law.

The Immortality of the Soul

The history of the universe is the history of the spiritual realm, and the final cause of the former can only be cognized in that of the latter.

The soul, as it relates directly to the body or is its producing agent, is necessarily subjected to the same nullity as the body. The same is true for the indirect, finite relation of the soul to reason as its principle. The true in-itself [*An-sich*] or essence of the soul, as it is merely appearing, is the *idea,* or the eternal notion of it, which abides in God and, united with it, is the principle of the eternal cognitions. That it is *eternal* is merely a statement of identity. Its temporal being does not alter the originary image; and just as it does not become more real by the existence of its corresponding finite image, it also cannot become less real or cease to be real altogether by the obliteration of the same.

However, the soul is not eternal because its duration is without beginning or end but rather because it has no relationship to time at all. Therefore, it cannot be called immortal in a sense that would include an individual continuity. Since this could not be conceived of independent of finitude and the body, immortality would only be a continued mortality and an ongoing imprisonment of the soul rather than a liberation. Therefore, the desire for immortality originates directly out of finitude, and it would be the least appealing for those who strive to release the soul from the body, i.e., those who according to Socrates are the *true philosophers.*°

It is therefore a misconception of the real spirit of philosophy to posit immortality of the soul above its eternalness and its being within the Idea† and a clear misunderstanding, it seems, to strip the soul in death of its sensuousness yet allow it to continue individually.‡

If the entanglement of the soul with the body (which is called individuality) is the consequence of a negation of the soul itself and a penalty, then the soul becomes necessarily eternal — that is, truly immortal — in proportion to

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° Plato, *Phaedo,* p. 153 [67*b*].

† Eschenmayer, op. cit., par. 67.

‡ Ibid., par. 68.

the degree to which it has freed itself from this negation. Those whose souls are inflated only with temporal and transient things necessarily pass over into a state that resembles nothingness and are, in a true sense, the most mortal; thus their necessary and involuntary fear of obliteration. On the other hand, a certitude of eternalness — love of rather than contempt for death — arises for those who are already imbued with eternalness and have set free the most the daemon within themselves.

If, however, finiteness is posited as true positivity and the entanglement with it as true reality and existence, then the former, those who most seek to free themselves of it as if it were a disease, necessarily become (in this sense) the least immortal while those who restrict themselves to smelling, tasting, seeing, feeling, and the like and enjoy their desired reality to the full continue on (in their sense) in their lower way of living, drunk on material things.

Just as the original finiteness of the soul already has a relationship to freedom and is a consequence of selfhood, any future state of the soul can only have the same relationship to its present state, and the necessary notion by which the present is linked with the future is that of guilt or purity from guilt.

Finiteness is itself the penalty, which is not the result of freely chosen destiny but the fated consequence of the falling-away (*herein* lies the reason for the *incomprehensible* barrier described by Fichte*): those, then, whose life has been nothing but a continuous withdrawal from the originary image necessarily awaits a state of negation. In contrast, those who have regarded life as a return to it will arrive in many fewer intermediary steps to the point where they will be fully united with their idea and cease to be mortal — just as Plato more figuratively described it in the *Phaedo:* how the first who got

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* ["This mutual recognition and reciprocal action of free beings in this world, is perfectly inexplicable by the laws of nature or of thought and can be explained only by the One in whom they are united, although to each other they are separate... Not immediately from thee to me, nor from me to thee, flows forth the knowledge which we have of each other; — we are separated by an insurmountable barrier." *The Vocation of Man* (Die Bestimmung des Menschen, 1800), in *Johann Gottlieb Fichte's Popular Works,* trans. W. Smith (London: Trübner & Co., 1873), p. 363.]

bogged down in the mud of matter are hid away in the lower world while the others, those who lived outstanding and pious lives, are liberated from this earth and let loose, as if out of a dungeon, to arrive at and live in a higher, purer region above the earth. Those, however, who are sufficiently purified by love and wisdom live the future *altogether without corporeality* and reach even more beautiful abodes.

This sequential order may prove itself with the following observation: the finite is nothing positive but merely that side of the selfhood of the ideas that turns into negation during the separation from the originary image. The highest goal of all spirits is not to cease to be within oneself but that for them this being-within-oneself ceases to be a negation and transforms itself into the opposite, that is, to become *completely* liberated *from corporeality* and from any relation to matter. What then is this nature, this muddled pseudo-image of the fallen spirits, other than a process of reincarnation of the ideas across all levels of finiteness until their selfhood, after shedding all difference, purges itself into an identity with the infinite and all arrive as reality also at their highest ideality? Since the selfhood is that which produces the body, the soul intuits itself anew in the pseudo-image to the degree to which it, afflicted with selfhood, forsakes the present state and determines its own place of palingenesis by either beginning a second life — in the higher spheres and on better stars — that is less subordinate to matter or by being banished into lower regions. Similarly, the soul, if it has broken away from its idol in the previous state and discharged anything that relates merely to the body, returns straightaway to the ideas and lives eternally and purely for itself in the intelligible world, without having another side to itself.

Just as the phenomenal world consists only in the intuition of spirits [*Anschauung der Geister*], this return of the souls to their origin and their separation from concreteness is also the resolve of the phenomenal world itself, which in the final step disappears in the spirit world [*Geisterwelt*]. To the same extent to which the former approaches its center, the latter also moves toward its goal, for even the celestial bodies are predestined to be transformed and gradually dissolved into a higher order.

In light of the final cause of history, which is the reconciliation of the falling-away, the latter itself can be regarded in a more positive way. For the original selfhood of the ideas emanated from the unmediated effect of God: the selfhood and absoluteness, however, into which the ideas enter is *self-determined* so that they are there as truly autonomous beings, irrespective of the absoluteness whereby the falling-away becomes the means of the *complete* revelation of God. By bestowing selfhood upon that which is intuited, on the strength of the necessity of His nature, God Himself hands it over to finiteness and, as it were, sacrifices it in order that the ideas, which were in Him without self-determination, are able to exist independently once again in absoluteness — which is accomplished through absolute and complete morality.

Only then the image of the Absolute's indifference or its lack of envy for the counter-image is completed, which *Spinoza* aptly expressed with the following sentence: *God loves Himself with infinite intellectual love.** Hence the origin of the universe out of God and His relationship to said universe has been described by all those religions whose spirit is founded upon the true essence of morality under this image of *God*'s love *of Himself* (the most beautiful concept of subject-objectification).

In our view, eternity begins here, or rather is already here. If, as *Eschenmayer* writes, there is to be a future state in which what is revealed only by faith becomes the subject of cognizance,† then one fails to see why this state could not equally come to pass under the same conditions as those that allow this state to begin in the beyond, namely, that the soul free itself as much as possible from the shackles of sensuality: to deny this means to fetter the soul completely to the body.

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* Spinoza, *Ethica*, part V, prop. XXXV ["Deus se ipsum amore intellectuali infinito amat." *Opera*, vol. 2].

† Eschenmayer, op. cit., p. 60.

Appendix

On the External Forms of Religion

If the State, modeled after the universe, is split into two spheres or classes of beings — wherein the free represent the ideas and the unfree the concrete and sensate things — then the ultimate and uppermost order remains unrealized by both. By using sensate things as tools or organs, the ideas obtain a direct relationship to the apparitions and enter into them as souls. God, however, as identity of the highest order, remains above all reality and eternally has merely an indirect relationship. If then in the higher moral order the State represents a *second nature,* then the divine can never have anything other than an indirect relationship to it; never can it bear any real relationship to it, and religion, if it seeks to preserve itself in unscathed pure ideality, can therefore never exist — even in the most perfect State — other than esoterically in the form of *mystery cults.*

If one desires that religion have also an exoteric and public side, then one presents religion to a nation through its poetry and its art. Mindful of its ideal character, however, proper religion relinquishes the public and withdraws into the sacred darkness of secrecy. No harm will come to either the esoteric or the exoteric form of religion from being antithetical to each other; rather, it is for the better if they allow each other to exist in their respective purity and independence. Of the little that we know of the Greek mystery cults, we do know undoubtedly that their doctrine was antithetical to public religion in the most direct and striking way. The pure spirit of the Greeks manifests itself likewise in the fact that they preserved that which by nature could not be public and real in its ideality and seclusion. One should not counter that this antithesis between the mystery cults and public religion could only exist because the former was only imparted to the few. For the mystery cults, which spread far beyond the borders

of Greece,* were not secret because participation in them was restricted but because their profanation, i.e., their transference into public life, was considered a crime and penalized. In Greece nothing was as jealously guarded as the preservation of the mystery cults in their disparity from all that is public. Those poets who base their poetry entirely on mythology mention the mystery cults as the most salvific and benevolent of institutions. They appear everywhere as the center point of public morality; the high moral beauty of the Greek tragedy points back to them, and it is not difficult to hear Sophocles' initiation into the mystery cults resonate in his poetry. If the notion of paganism had not been abstracted from public religion, one would long ago have realized how paganism and Christianity were together all along and how the latter emerged from the former only by making the mystery cults public — a truth that can be deduced historically from most of the Christian customs, their symbolic rituals and initiations, which were obvious imitations of those prevailing in the mystery cults.

The striving of spiritual religion to become truly public and mythologically objective is as futile as it is contrary to its nature — and desecrates it — to mingle with what is real and sensate.

True mythology is a symbolism of the ideas, which is only possible through forms of nature; it represents an absolute and complete rendering finite [*Verendlichung*] of infiniteness. This would not take place in a religion that relates directly to the infinite and conceives of a unification of the divine and the natural only as an abolition of the latter, as is the case in the concept of the miracle. The miracle is the exoteric matter of such a religion: its forms are not essential but merely historical, not categorical but merely individual, not eternally lasting and undying but merely transient apparitions. If one seeks a universal mythology, then one ought to seize upon the symbolic view of nature and let the gods again take possession of it and imbue it; otherwise, the spiritual world remains

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* Cicero, *De natura deorum* 1:42: "Omitto Eleusinem sanctam illam et augustam, ubi initiantur gentes orarum ultimatae." [I shall say nothing of that sacred and august Eleusina, into whose mystery cults the most distant nations were initiated.]

free of religion and completely removed from sensate outward appearances or at least is only celebrated with sacred, fervent songs and an equally abstracted poetry, like the secret and religious poetry of old,* of which modern poetry is merely the exoteric manifestation — albeit, thus, one of lesser purity.

In regard to the doctrines and the institution of the mystery cults, I will only mention what can be abstracted rationally from the ancient sources.

The esoteric religion is necessarily monotheistic, just as its exoteric counterpart in any form necessarily lapses into polytheism. Only with the idea of the one-per-se [*schlechthin Einen*] and an absolute-ideal are all other ideas posited. From it follows, albeit immediately, the doctrine of an absolute state of the souls within the ideas and the original oneness with God, wherein it partakes in the intuition of that which is true, beautiful, and good in itself — a doctrine that can also be symbolized in temporal terms as the pre-existence of the souls. This cognition is immediately followed by that of the loss of this absolute state, that is, of the falling-away of the ideas and the ensuing banishment of the souls to corporeality and the sensate world. This doctrine may be expressed in various ways corresponding to the views found on this matter in reason itself. While it seems to have been prevalent in most Greek religions to explain sensate life from a previously incurred guilt, that same doctrine is illustrated in each of the mystery cults differently, for example, by that of a suffering god who has become mortal. Another purpose for religious doctrine is to reconcile the falling-away from the Absolute and to transform the negative relationship of all that is finite to it into something positive. Its practical doctrine is based upon the first one, for it attempts to attain the liberation of the soul from the body as its negative side: entry into the old mystery cults was described as both an offering and sacrifice of life, as corporeal death and resurrection of the soul, and thus there was one word that described both death and

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* Friedrich Schlegel, *Geschichte der Poesie der Griechen und Römer* [(History of Greek and Roman Poetry) (Berlin: Johann Friedrich Unger, 1798)], p. 6[: "Orgiasticism, festive frenzy in lawful customs, which cloaks a secret, sacred meaning, was an essential part of the mystery cults."]

initiation.* The primary intent of simplification of the soul and withdrawal from the body was the convalescence from error, being the original and most profound illness of the soul, through regaining the intellectual intuition of what alone is true and eternal — the ideas. Its moral purpose was the disengagement of the soul from affects, to which it is subjugated only as long as it is entangled with the body, and from the love of sensate life [*Sinnenleben*], which is the ground and the impetus for immorality.

Associated by necessity with these doctrines is that of the eternalness of the soul and the moral relationship between the present and the future state.

Any spiritual and esoteric religion must be traced back to these doctrines, these eternal pillars of virtue and higher truth.

Regarding the external form and the constitution of the religious mystery cults, they must be viewed as public institutions that originated from the disposition and mind of the Greek nation itself, founded by the State and their sacrality protected by it. The State did not allow only one part, in the manner of secret cults, while excluding another; rather, it worked as much toward the inner and moral unification of all that belonged to the State as it worked toward external and legal unification. There are necessarily varying degrees to which people succeed in arriving at that which is true in itself. For the less successful ones, there needs to be a kind of forecourt [*Vorhof*], a preparatory realm that, as in *Euripides'* plays, relates to full initiation as sleep does to death. Sleep is merely negative while death is positive; it is the last and absolute liberator. The first preparation for attaining the highest truth can only be negative; it consists in the weakening and, wherever possible, the extinction of sensate affects and anything that disturbs the placid and moral organization of the soul. It is sufficient for most to reach this level of liberation, and the participation in the mystery cults of those who are not free tends to remain within this limit. Images full of horror, which show the soul the nullity of all that is temporal and

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* [Τελετή, initiation; τελευτή, end of life. H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996).]

make it tremble with foreboding, belong to this level as well. Once the relationship to the body has become extinct enough, the soul begins to *dream,* that is, receive images from the nonreal and ideal world. The second level is therefore where the history and the destiny of the universe are represented figuratively and especially through action; for just as in the epic is reflected only the finite (the infinite in all its manifestations is alien to it) — while, in contrast, the exoteric tragedy is the actual impression of public morality — so the dramatic form is most suitable for the esoteric representation of religious doctrines. Those who penetrate the shell and reach the meaning of the symbols and have proven themselves through moderation, wisdom, self-conquest, and devotion to a nonsensate world will pass into a new life and, as adepts, see the pure truth as it is, without the mediation of images. Those, however, who arrive at this stage before the others must be the leaders, and no one who has not received the last consecration is allowed to follow them. For the destiny of the entire race will be revealed to them in this last disclosure since in this group the highest principles of the royal art of legislation and the nobility of mind are practiced, which is most common to those who rule.

Thus religion, having a purely moral effect, is kept from the danger of mixing with the real, the sensate, or from laying claims to external dominion and violence, which would be contrary to its nature. Philosophy, on the other hand, and those enamored with it [*Liebhaber*], the naturally initiated, remain eternally allied with religion.

Selected Correspondence between Schelling and C. A. Eschenmayer

April 1804 - July 1805

Letter from Schelling to Eschenmayer

Würzburg, April 1804*

Your book,† which you kindly forwarded to me, continues to be a much appreciated gift, and I have read and reread it many times since Prof. Paulus‡ alerted me to its publication. Curiously, your gift arrived just as I was about to send the final pages of a short treatise, *Philosophy and Religion,* to the printer. It relates almost entirely to your book, and you will receive a copy as soon as it is printed. I don't have to tell you how grateful I am to you for your book, the depth of which has inspired me greatly. However, in regard to your understanding of my philosophy, I believe that a more significant step needs to be taken, one into another realm. I still believe this realm is to be found in speculation and more clearly perceived therein, and not in faith. You have attributed to the latter much of what I am certain lies within the former, even though until now I was unable to articulate this certainty because of deficiencies in my representation. I have striven to preserve the noble rapport established between us, but as to your criticism of my having *excluded virtue,* I have to be as hard on you as you were on me.

I count as one of my most joyous expectations the prospect of a reconciliation with a mind such as yours, just as I have rejoiced that we are no longer on opposite sides but more or less in agreement in the *matter itself*...

Farewell, my noble friend!...

Your

Schelling

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* [*Aus Schelling's Leben. In Briefen,* ed. Gustav Leopold Plitt, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Verlag von G. Hirzel, 1870), pp. 14–15.]

† [Eschenmayer's *Die Philosophie in ihrem Uebergang zur Nichtphilosophie.*]

‡ [Heinrich Eberhard Gottlob Paulus (1761–1851), a Protestant theologian who taught theology and oriental languages at the University of Würzburg between 1803 and 1807.]

Letter from Schelling to Eschenmayer

Würzburg, July 10, 1804*

I hope, my esteemed friend, that you have received the little book† I dispatched to you earlier, which could not be accompanied by a letter for utter lack of time.

The reason for our mutual misunderstandings has only now become clear to me.

I posit *within* the Absolute, as eternally innate, the infinite or essence — the subject; the finite or form — the object; and the eternal, or the indifference of both. The latter, however, is *potency* [*Potenz*]; in fact, it is potency to the third degree [*dritte Potenz*], but the *Absolute* is not a potency since it comprehends and dissolves all potencies within itself. — *This* Absolute is what you seem to call God.

Now and then, I may have made out that the *Absolute* is the *third unitive mode* or potency. I have, however, also expressly stated the opposite, e.g., in the introduction to the second edition of my *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* (p. 74): "One might be tempted to define the Absolute itself as the unity of both unitive modes, but to be exact, it is not so."‡ — I add to this that the Absolute for me is precisely that wherein those 3rd unitive modes lie in equal measure and absoluteness.

It might be necessary to improve upon my in many instances faulty expressions as far as the main idea is concerned. Would the following exposition meet with your approval? —

To call the *subject* of absoluteness, the ideality (I elsewhere have called this the infinite), which is infinite but comprehends reality within itself, the Absolute —

To denote the *form* of absoluteness, the reality (the objective or finite), which is infinite and comprehends all ideality within itself, as the form of absolute*ness* —

To denote the *eternal* as the *absoluteness of absoluteness*, or as indifference. Finally, to posit the *Absolute* — insofar as it

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* [*F. W. J. Schelling: Briefe und Dokumente*, pp. 320–21.]

† [Schelling's *Religion und Philosophie.*]

‡ [F. W. J. Schelling, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* (Idea for a Philosophy of Nature, 1797/1802), *SW* 2: 63–64.]

dissolves all potencies into one and, because it comprehends all of them and is not a potency itself, is neither real nor ideal nor simply their unity but all of this, which means that it is nothing in particular — to posit *this* Absolute = God...

Farewell and preserve in good memory your admirer and friend

Schelling

Letter from Eschenmayer to Schelling

Kirchheim unter Tek, July 24, 1804*

With thanks for your latest book, I am sending you something new that I have worked on this spring, but which has yet be published.† Your latest book has proven to me that a part of our misunderstanding is not in the main idea but rather in its expression. Furthermore, I find all misunderstandings dissolved in the schema you included in your last letter to me. In fact, I find therein my ideas more purely intuited than I had originally. Allow me to reiterate your schema below:

> The *subject* of absoluteness, the ideality or the infinite, which comprehends all reality within itself; —
>
> the *form* of absoluteness, the reality or the objective, finite, which comprehends all ideality within itself; —
>
> the *eternal* as the *absoluteness of absoluteness* or as indifference; —
>
> and finally, the Absolute outside of all potency and unity = God.

The first, or the subject of absoluteness, is to me understanding [*Verstand*] plus all that it concerns — I call this the *image* [*Bild*].

The second, or the form of absoluteness, is to me the universe in its entire manifoldedness — I call this the *counter-image* [*Gegenbild*].

The third, or the eternal as indifference of both, is to me reason [*Vernunft*] — I call this the *originary image* [*Urbild*].

Therefore, that which I call reason is both image and counter-image, both understanding (into which all reality goes) and universe (from which all ideality goes out).

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* [*Aus Schelling's Leben. In Briefen*, pp. 24–28.]

† [Eschenmayer here refers to his book *Der Eremit und der Fremdling: Gespräche über das Heilige und die Geschichte* (The Eremite and the Stranger: Conversations on Sacredness and History), to be published in 1805.]

The opposition to the originary image, however, is to me the after-image [*Nachbild*], and this, considered *philosophically,* I call the Absolute. Only philosophy deals with faithful after-images of the originary image, and the Absolute is thus its sole basis and the pinnacle of its speculation.

Reason as originary image ought to be equal to the Absolute as its after-image — that is the task of philosophy.

What now leads me beyond the Absolute is as follows: If the philosopher desires to form a faithful after-image of the essence of reason as the originary image, which is brought about through the mediation of intellectual intuition, then reason (or the originary image or indifference in the eternal) must become fully and entirely his object. But then, with reason as the originary image, where would the *eye** be located, which cognizes and beholds the equivalence and resemblance of the originary image with the after-image — or reason, with the constructed idea of the Absolute? The eye cannot lie in reason; it therefore must lie beyond it, and this is why I have been forced to look for the last anchor [*Anker*] of philosophy above the Absolute, in the soul or in faith, and express it as potency of beatitude because it lies truly beyond cognizance and desire and only reveals itself in meditation [*Andacht*] or faith. It is impossible for reason to project *itself,* for the philosopher, like the painter of an image, to make a faithful copy of it; this is, however, what is necessary for the Absolute to fully express the essence of reason.

That higher eye that cognizes and beholds the equivalence of the indifference in the eternal or in reason with the Absolute as its faithful after-image is the soul. The beyond of the Absolute is not a reawakening of difference, but just as all that is different is lost to me in the Absolute, so also the Absolute, as the last remainder of our profane [*unheilige*] nature, is lost to me in this higher element. The beyond, however, is set here against this world, but it is an opposition that no

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* [See Fichte's notion, in his *Wissenschaftslehre* (Doctrine of Science) of 1801, of the self as an activity into which an eye is implanted (*eingesetzt*): "This eye lies not outside of [the Absolute] but within it, and it is simply the living penetration of the Absolute itself [*das lebendige sich Durchdringen der Absolutheit selbst*]," in *Johann Gottlieb Fichte's sämmtliche Werke,* ed. J. H. Fichte (Berlin: Verlag von Veit und Comp. 1845), vol. 2, p. 19.]

longer concerns speculation because here appears the *symbol* wherein all evincing comes to an end. — You have represented this higher element indisputably in the fourth point of your schema, that which you call the Absolute; insofar as it dissolves all potencies, and since it contains all of them, it is itself *no* particular potency (but even so the highest and most all-embracing), neither ideal nor real nor itself merely its unity. According to the above, this Absolute, which you posit = God, is to me still the soul, about which no speculation takes place because all speculation originates first within it. A philosopher would need to exist outside of his own existence if he wanted to project the entire soul as an originary image or ideal-image [*Vorbild*] in order to represent it within a faithful after-image. God is to me the asymptote of the soul, who cannot become a tangent like the previous potencies and as such can only be the subject of meditation and faith. — What I am suggesting here is more immediately contained in the difference between the following two questions: Is God in us or Are we in God? In the former case God would manifest Himself as a product of speculation, — be it also, as in the Absolute, the most supreme, — and hence, because all speculation, as part of the soul, is not equal to its totality, God would be lower than the soul. In the latter case, however, God's dignity is above the soul, but for that very reason, it is no longer a subject of cognition and intuition. In the former case God would be below the ideas; in the latter, God is infinitely above them. This is the true position of my latest publication, the linchpin of the entire book. Alas, my dear professor, numerous statements in your writings until now support my position in the clearest manner and, if I may say so, go beyond the formal representations of the main ideas you have made heretofore! Only from the standpoint of sacredness and beatitude [*des Heiligen und Seligen*] can the sensate world be truly nothing, as you so often say; in the originary oneness of the ideas, however, it is still something, although not much. Everything you say about the mystery cults points to that. Only from the standpoint of the holy and blest arises a nostalgia for death, which you have said several times and which in my view surpasses even the splendor of the ideas. — You say in your latest publication: "The ultimate goal of the universe and

its history is nothing other than the complete reconciliation with and re-absorption into the Absolute. The importance of a philosophy that makes the principle of the Fall of Man, in its most universal articulation, its own principle, albeit unconsciously, cannot be emphasized enough."*

In this and other statements, I justifiably believe to see that you have now left behind the speculation contained in the Absolute.

In a new publication,† Professor Weiller has made the holy and God his Absolute and indeed has, for the better, followed your path. But it is rather vexing that he did not acknowledge this fact and instead imputes to you that you did not get beyond the opposition of subject and object since you were, in fact, the first to trample this onesidedness with your foot. Herr Weiller wants to resurrect the concept [*Begriff*] behind what I call devotion and faith by claiming that my premonition did not penetrate all the way into the concept. How odd!

The task I undertook this spring consisted precisely in representing the idea of the original sin and reconciliation as the principle of world history; you be the judge as to whether I succeeded...

Farewell, my dearest Herr Professor, and recommend me to your wife.

Your

Eschenmayer

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* [Above, p. 31.]

† [Kajetan Weiller, *Der Geist der allerneuesten Philosophie der HH. Schelling, Hegel, und Kompagnie: Eine Uebersetzung aus der Schulsprache in die Sprache der Welt* (The Spirit of the Newest Philosophy of MM. Schelling, Hegel, and Company: A Translation from the Academic Language into the Language of the World) (Munich: Josef Lentner, 1803).]

Letter from Eschenmayer to Schelling

Kirchheim unter Tek, March 23, 1805*

I find what you say about potency-free intuition [*potenzlosen Schauen*] to be quite true, as well as the further conclusion that the Absolute itself is not a potency, and that it would be erroneous to posit beatitude [*das Selige*] as potency, something I was mislead about in the past by dogmatic literalism [*Schulform*]. I find in the concept of a potency-free intuition the following agreement between us: If the Absolute is nothing other than the highest expression for the originary image (reason) as articulated by the philosopher, then the former is a potency-free intuition precisely because it is an intuition of the Absolute, itself outside of the same;† it is the gaze of the soul‡ that is directed at the resemblance of the after-image (philosophy) with the originary image (reason). This intuition, as eminent as it is in itself and as much as it precedes philosophy, is nevertheless not a potency but rather the principle and the comprehensiveness of all potencies and, for that very reason, also the totality of all cognizance and volition. So far, I am in complete agreement with you; and your enemies, such as B. Wagner and Weiller, who are trying to construct a disagreement between us in this point, ought to retract their premature judgments. Alas — this intuition is only the this-worldly direction of the soul toward cognizance and activity on an earthly sphere [*Weltsphäre*], and I differentiate this from the otherworldly direction of the soul within faith and meditation, which in itself is uncognizable [*unerkennbar*] and undemonstratable [*undemonstrabel*], and for that very reason possible only through revelation. To me,

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* [*Aus Schelling's Leben. In Briefen*, pp. 57–59.]

† [Schelling's marginalia: "As is any thing outside the Absolute."]

‡ [Cf. Ignatius of Loyola's *vista de la imaginación* (*Exx.* 47): "Where the object is an invisible one, ... the composition will be to see with the gaze of the imagination, and to consider, that my soul is imprisoned in this body which will one day disintegrate, and also my whole composite self (by this I mean the soul joined with the body), as if exiled in this valley among brute beasts."]

religion is not the consumption of said totality, which can be cognized through philosophy, but rather is outside of all totality; it has nothing in common with the profanity of reason and philosophy. That which is given by revelation [*das Geoffenbarte*] is neither *cognized** nor demonstrated nor intuited nor spoken anywhere but rather felt by intellectual sentiment [*Empfindung*] only, and for that very reason it is the only one that is unmediated, to which all that is mediated attaches itself. I would like to call this the religious sense, which is indeed active in all peoples and at all times but mostly lets itself be known quietly. It is alive in Christ and especially in the martyrs. It may be that you would push the boundary between philosophy and religion, which to me is the fruit of much pondering, up even higher and count the very act of the soul in which it senses the destruction of all speculation in itself, as it were, itself to philosophy. In that case, however, philosophy deprives itself of its most essential character, which consists in a constant objectifying of reason or the originary image and is called speculation.

You proceed from intuition. — Is it perhaps of the kind that I described in a passage of my first book? "Faith is probably also a form of cognizance or rather intuition, but it intuits an invisible world whose negative pole is directed against reason. Revelation is to the invisible world what light is to the visible world."†

If this is what you are saying, then there is no longer any difference between what you call intuition and what I call faith, except that this intuition is not a philosophical intuition but is rather blind and thus faith...

Esteem and friendship from your devoted

Eschenmayer

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* [Schelling's marginalia: "As if there were such a thing in philosophy."]

† [Eschenmayer, *Die Philosophie in ihrem Uebergang zur Nichtphilosophie*. par. 50.]

Letter from Schelling to Eschenmayer

Würzburg, July 30, 1805*

This letter is a very late reply to your letter from March 23rd of this year. I will not bother with the customary excuse of having been too busy but confess in all honesty that your letter surprised me with insight that your previous writings did not contain, so that it indeed made in impossible for me to answer you right away.

You posit the essential character of philosophy in "a constant objectifying of the originary image" (which furthermore you presume = reason) and insofar, you say, is called speculation. Now, ever since I saw the light in philosophy [*das Licht in der Philosophie*] in 1801, when I published the well-known aphorisms, and even before, toward the end of my system of idealism,† I have asserted with all possible clarity that philosophy in no way consists of an objectifying of the originary image, i.e., in a (insofar subjective) positing of the originary image or Absolute as an object; that a positing within reason is not a positing of man (as subject), and like that of which reason is the positing, it is neither subjective nor objective but rather *absolute*.

You, on the other hand, are saying that the Absolute is none other than the highest expression for the imaginary image as articulated by the *philosopher*! Contrary to philosophy, you are declaring: that which is given in revelation is neither cognized nor demonstrated nor intuited. Quasi as if this were for philosophy the divine; as if the Absolute should rather not be regarded as *as an object* — which is what gave my entire philosophy its current direction and distinguishes it from dogmatism or unphilosophy as well as nonphilosophy —; as if I ever admitted to this particular (subjective) sphere of cognizance, which the Absolute could be pulled *into;* as if according to the fundamental view, without which my philosophical doctrine could not even have developed,

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* [*Aus Schelling's Leben. In Briefen,* pp. 60–62.]

† [*System des transcendentalen Idealismus* (System of Transcendental Idealism, 1800).]

all cognizance of the Absolute, objectively speaking, is not necessarily also in turn a cognizance of the Absolute, subjectively speaking, and within the *Absolute,* and therefore is itself divine but on the part of the subject is an absolute self-oblivion [*Selbstvergessen*], etc.

These comments seem to show an understanding of philosophy on your part that I did not dare presume previously. Since I did not want to form an opinion based simply on your letter, I had to postpone my reply until I was able to thoroughly study your book at leisure with respect to this difference between us. Since I now am convinced that your letter does indeed express the spirit of your writings, I have to declare my position categorically in order to cut short any further misunderstandings as to whether the faith of your nonphilosophy could really be the boundary of my philosophy, for which you will surely not resent me because of our friendship, which is based on a mutual love of truth...

Farewell and be assured of my profound esteem

Schelling

Glossary

Abbild	image
Abfall	falling-away
Ahndung	premonition
Allgut	highest good
Anschauung	intuition
an sich	in itself
Ansich	in-itself
aufheben	lift, dissolve
außerwesentlich	extra-essential
Bestimmende	determining agent
Bewirkende	effecting agent
Bildung	edification
Einbildung	imaginative formation
Einheit	oneness, identity, unitive mode
Erkennen	cognizance
Erkenntnis	cognition
Erscheinung	apparition
Erziehung	education
für sich	for itself
Gegenbild	counter-image
Geisterwelt	spirit world
Gottheit	godhood
Handeln	action, acting
Ichheit	I-ness
Idealgrund	ideal-ground
Identität	identity
in sich	within itself
intellectuelle Anschauung	intellectual intuition
Intellektualwelt	intellectual world
Mittheilung	impartation
Möglichkeit	possibility
Nachbild	after-image
Potenz	potency
Producirende	producing agent
Realität	reality
Reflexion	reflective cognition, reasoning

Scheinbild	pseudo-image
Scheinleben	pseudo-life
Schicksal	fate
schlechthin Eine	one-per-se
schlechthin Ideale	ideal-per-se
schlechthin Reale	real-per-se
Selbstheit	selfhood
Seligkeit	beatitude
Sinnenwelt	sensate world
Sprung	leap
That	deed
Thätigkeit	activity
Verendlichung	rendering finite
Verhältnis	circumstance, condition
Verhängnis	fate, predicament
Vernunfterkenntnis	rational cognition
Vernunftleben	rational life
Vorbild	ideal-image
Vorsehung	providence
Vorwelt	prehistoric world
wahr; wahrhaft	true, truly
Wesen	inherent nature, essence
Wirklichkeit	actuality
Unphilosophie	unphilosophy
Unseligkeit	unhappiness
Ur-	originary
Urbild	originary image