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Chapter 4

The archaic and the sublimity of origins

Alan Cardew

My abyss speaks, I have turned my ultimate depth into the light.
(Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra)

The primordial nothing

Robert Fludd commences the first volume of his History of the Macrocosm and Microcosm (1617) with a representation of Nothing, a black square. On each side of the square is written Et sic in infinitum. It is not strictly an illustration because there is no lustration, or light in it. It depicts the Mysterium Magnum, or the ‘Great Darkness’, which preceded creation and which stretches for infinity in every direction – however, there is no direction, it is ungraspable, there are no properties, inclinations, no quantity, no thing.

Fludd took the term Mysterium Magnum from Paracelsus, and Paracelsus gave the original Nothing the name ‘the Iliaster’. In a sense this is not very informative, as ‘Iliaster’ is intended to be the ultimate oxymoron, compounded from hyle (i.e. matter) and aster (i.e., star, or, better, spirit; as the stars were thought to be spiritual substances). For Paracelsus, to understand the meaning of ‘Iliaster’, the intangible original condition which was both soul and matter, was to understand the nature of the Philosopher’s Stone. To comprehend the secret of the Mysterium Magnum, ‘the true principles which obtained in the universal genesis’, was ‘enough to possess anyone with a full and practical illumination concerning the arcanum of philosophy’. Not only is the primordial state a challenge to expression, a state to be approached through paradox and contradiction, it has the added difficulty that it is a secret, a great mystery which requires initiation. The idea of mystery is a constant and persistent association with the primordial.

Logically, working our way back to the Beginning, we are stranded in a temporal version of the ‘regressus argument’ which is customarily illustrated by the apocryphal Indian myth that the world is supported by an elephant which is supported by a turtle – what supports the turtle? The same argument appears in John Locke, Henry David Thoreau, Lewis Carroll, Bertrand Russell, William James, and...
Stephen Hawking, beginning the latter’s *A Brief History of Time* (1988). These problems are anticipated by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) in his first critique, the *Critique of Pure Reason (Kritik der reinen Vernunft)* (1781; 1787), in his discussion of the Antinomies of Reason, which occur when discussing any system of cosmological ideas. It is difficult to arrive at a notion of an original cause, a beginning to space and time, when our understanding is made up of notions of space and time, and our concept of causality always demands a preceding cause in which each effect depends on a preceding cause, and that cause depends on a preceding cause, and that cause on a preceding cause and so on ad infinitum. There is always an antecedent in our understanding, and we cannot arrive at the original cause, however assiduously we pursue a regressive synthesis; we are ultimately at an impasse in which there must be an origin but at the same time there cannot be one. Kant posits the possibility of an absolute spontaneity which begins of itself (see A...
and this must be an act of absolute freedom as it has not been pre-determined by a pre-existing cause. Kant anticipates the ‘singularity’ of the Big Bang of current cosmology.

To contemplate Fludd’s Mysterium is to contemplate everything and nothing. The blank black square is like Borges’ ‘Mirror of Ink’, which reflects, not the world, but the soul of the man gazing into it; not just the personality, but the very depths of that soul. The way to the primordial may lie, not beyond, but beneath the rational mind. In his essay ‘The Mirror of Enigmas’, Borges examines the verse from St Paul: *Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate: tunc autem facie ad faciem. Nunc cognosco ex parte: tunc autem cognoscam sicut et cognitus sum* (‘Now we see in a mirror, in darkness; but later we shall see face to face. Now I know in part: but later I shall know as I am known’) (1 Corinthians 13:12).

This version reflects Borges’ preferred translation by Cipriano de Valera, rather than the familiar King James version: ‘For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.’ Borges includes in his essay a number of reflections on this passage by Léon Bloy, including the following:

The statement by St Paul [. . .] would be a skylight though which one might submerge himself in the true Abyss, which is the soul of man. The terrifying immensity of the firmament’s abysses is an illusion, an external reflection of our own abysses, perceived ‘in a mirror’. We should invert our eyes and practice a sublime astronomy in the infinitude of our hearts, for which a God was willing to die. [. . .] If we see the Milky Way, it is because it actually exists in our souls.²

The very obscurity of the primordial, like the darkest night and the profoundest mystery, engenders a strong reaction, even though – and perhaps because – it is beyond thought and the horizon of the manifest world. Edmund Burke (1729–1797), in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), analyses such responses and makes the following, rather alarming statements:

It is one thing to make an idea clear, and another to make it affecting to the imagination. [. . .]

To make any thing very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary. [. . .]

A clear idea [. . .] is another name for a little idea.³

The primordial and the archaic are certainly obscure and affecting, and they are most certainly threats to clear reason.⁴ They are sublime in Burke’s realization of the term, in that the mind is overawed and the individual overwhelmed. The feeling of the sublime, whether it is prompted by storms, darkness, mountains, gulfs, or the vast unknown produces a tremendous affect; it ‘hurries us on with an
irresistible force’. It is best understood through our emotional response. Burke assigns various passions to the experience of the sublime, the chief of which is ‘Astonishment’, defined as ‘that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other’ (Burke, 57).

Horror is excited by the terrible; which includes poisonous serpents, limitless space, and great dimensions. Obscurity, ‘that condition when we are unable to make out the possible dangers that confront us’, is linked by Burke to the dread experienced in despotism, and, in particular to ‘the unfathomable obscurity of religion’:

Almost all the pagan temples were dark. Even in the barbarous temples of the Americans at this day, they keep their idol in a dark part of the hut, which is consecrated to his worship. For this purpose the Druids performed all their ceremonies in the bosom of the darkest woods, and in the shade of the oldest and most spreading oaks.

(Burke, 59)

Burke anticipates Nietzsche’s observations on the architecture of antiquity:

[An] atmosphere of inexhaustible meaningfulness hung about [an ancient] building like a magic veil. Beauty entered the system only secondarily, without impairing the basic feeling of uncanny sublimity, of sanctification by magic of the gods’ nearness. At most the beauty tempered the dread – but this dread was the prerequisite everywhere.⁵

Other associations with the sublime which may equally attach to the primordial are Privation with which are associated Vacuity, Darkness, Solitude and Silence, and Vastness, linked to tremendous gulf and heights; an Infinity which exceeds the senses. At the start of his analysis of the Sublime and the Beautiful, Burke states his belief that ‘an attempt to range and methodize some of our most leading passions, would be a good preparative’ to his ensuing discourse (Burke, 52). He thereupon develops a palette of qualities, of feelings, which enable us not only to recognize the Sublime but also to articulate and recognise the response to the Primordial; although it defies definition we can describe the emotions which are associated with it. They emerge from its very obscurity.

Throughout the descriptions of the primordial and the archaic there is conceptual darkness, the original condition is rendered in the darkest chiaroscuro. Hegel famously criticised the ‘abyss of vacuity’ of Schelling’s identity philosophy in the Preface to his Phenomenology (1807) which dealt with an Absolute about which nothing could be said; or, in other words, ‘the night in which, as we say, all cows are black’. Yet it is not the case that this is an empty nothing; a blank. In contradiction of King Lear’s ‘nothing comes of nothing’, everything comes of nothing. There may be a lack of determinate and complete knowledge, but the forces associated with it are overwhelming.
To contemplate the primordial and the archaic is to gaze far into the black waters of the Lake at Nemi, to uncover what lies in the deepest mines, to fathom the profoundest gULfs, and to search ‘the dark backward and abyss of time’. It is a katabasis, a descent, not into the Underworld, but deeper, before the creation of the Underworld. Nothing can be said of such depths, there is no time and space, no where, no thing. However, the feelings which the primordial engenders, its dark sublimity, are one with those very qualities which engender the Creation. Terror and dread, obscurity, vastness, the uncanny awaken forces, ‘the pregnant causes’ which are the beginnings of experience and are the dim, unconscious shadowings of order. It is also an exploration of the innermost abyss of the soul. Those who have grasped the ebon bough – Friedrich Creuzer (1771–1858), Jakob Böhme (1575–1624), Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775–1854), Petar Petrović-Njegoš (1813–1851) – write of affect, of longings and passions, violent, beautiful, and terrible which precede the World and which drive the emergence of God. It is these responses which we will examine in what follows.

Cancelled cycles: Before the beginning

In The Myth of the Eternal Return (1954), Mircea Eliade famously argued that in pre-modern societies Man’s actions are given force and meaning through repetition; re-enacting what was laid down by gods and the ancestors in the Beginning, ‘in those days’ (in illo tempore, ab origine). When such beginnings impart such authenticity and value, it seems rather perverse, if not irreverent, to enquire what preceded the beginning. Yet so strong and inveterate is the idea of a causal chain that when a beginning is identified it is hard to resist the idea that there must have been something before it. How did it get there? And, if creation has some sort of narrative sequence, was there some sort of ontological prequel, was there a beginning before the beginning, or was there a whole string of previous beginnings? Did there exist some state or entity that was more primordial than the primordial, and when the archaic was new was there another, more ancient archaic? Is there something earlier and more deeply sunk than Atlantis?

There exist in various traditions fragmentary accounts of cancelled cycles, previous creations and pre-primordial entities; remains of which may even persist in our own time and universe. For example, in what appears to be an unexceptional passage in the Book of Genesis (35: 31ff.), there is a list of Esau and his successors, known as the Kings of Edom. In the Kabbalistic tradition, in the Zohar, this was interpreted in the profoundest terms as an ‘unbridled flow of life’. It signified ‘the emergence of God from the depths of Himself into creation’ through an initial series of unsuccessful creations. Thus, inscribed in Genesis is a record of previous geneses. According to Gershom Scholem’s Kabbalah (1974), the Zohar interpreted Edomite Kings (malkhei Edom or malkin Kadma’im) as being primordial but unstable realms that preceded the primordial Adam, Adam Kadmon. They lacked his self-sustaining balance of parts. Each creation involved a ‘breaking of vessels’, or Kelim, the violent irruption of the Godhead into a new
sphere, each of which crystallised an aspect of God’s being. The fragments of these vessels, *Kelippot* or *Qlippoth*, cosmic leftovers, either persisted in the present creation, or were the material from which the present creation was formed.

Similar ideas found mythopoetic speculations in the Romantic period, notably in works by Byron (1788–1824) and Shelley (1792–1822). In *Cain: A Mystery* (1821) by Lord Byron, Cain is tempted by Satan into becoming the first murderer. As part of this process, Cain is taken on a malign tour of Creation which includes the Underworld. In the ‘Realm of Death’, ‘shadowy and dim’, Cain sees shades or phantoms which exhibit neither the intelligences of heaven nor the forms of man:

And yet they have an aspect, which though not
Of men nor angels, looks like something, which
If not the last, rose higher than the first,
Haughty and high, and beautiful and full
Of seeming strength, but of inexplicable
Shape; for never I saw such. They bear not,
The wing of seraph, nor the face of man,
Nor form of mightiest brute, nor aught that is
Now breathing; mighty yet and beautiful
As the most beautiful and mighty which
Live, and yet unlike them, that I scarce
Can call them living.  

These intelligent, great, glorious things were once inhabitants of the same, though different earth; the present earth being ‘too little and too lowly’ to sustain such creatures. Thus, the place of Man is diminished in the order of creation(s), and Cain is given a vision of the contingent, evanescent nature of existence; to murder a man is insignificant in the scale of things, for even these beings, living high above mankind, were simply wiped away:

By a most crushing and inexorable
Destruction and disorder of the elements,
Which struck a world to chaos, as a chaos
Subsiding has struck out a world: such things,
Though rare in time, are frequent in eternity.  

Byron and Shelley had been reading and discussing the *Discours sur les revolutions de la surface du globe et sur les changemens qu’elles ont produits dans la regne animal* (1812) by Georges Cuvier (1769–1832), and its argument for ‘catastrophism’. Cuvier argued that different species such as the ‘megathereum’, whose bones had been recently identified, had existed on the globe at earlier times and had disappeared as the result of huge convulsions that racked creation from time to time.
Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound: A Lyrical Drama* (1818) also exhibits these ideas. The final vision of the work uncovers the secrets of the Earth’s deep heart and the ‘[m]elancholy ruins of cancelled cycles’: 

The wrecks beside of many a city vast,  
Whose population which the earth grew over  
Was mortal, but not human; see, they lie,  
Their monstrous works, and uncouth skeletons,  
Their statues, homes and fanes; prodigious shapes  
Huddled in grey annihilation, split,  
Jammed in the hard, black deep.  

Such notions of different races of ‘men’ replacing one another clearly inform Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), in which Frankenstein seeks to fashion a new race of more perfect men, or in her novel *The Last Man* (1826), in which mankind is reduced to one remaining survivor. There may be future cycles and future beings to replace us as the inhabitants of Earth, something which is developed in Bulwer Lytton’s novel *The Coming Race* (1871). In this book, dedicated to the mythologist Max Müller, Lytton’s protagonist, a mining engineer, descends to a subterranean utopia inhabited by the ‘Vril-Ya’. The latter are a race more perfect than man, taller, stronger, winged and matriarchal. The women are larger, more imposing than the men, and they command a mysterious life energy called Vril. One day, the coming race will emerge from their glowing golden underworld to replace mankind. A cross between Valkyrie and the Nibelungs of Wagner’s contemporary *Ring*-cycle who toil in the depths, they share the potential of destiny. Just as the depths are the repository of cancelled cycles and the relics of other pasts, they also hold the future which emerges from the depths, like Wagner’s Erda, prophesying the art work of the future or the ring of power.

A further, but altogether more sinister, poetic account of the time before origin may be found in the work of the Montenegran epic poet Petar Petrović Njegoš. Njegoš, ‘the poet of Serbian cosmic misfortune’, was the last Vladika, or Prince Bishop, of Cernagora. He succeeded his uncle Bishop Petar I at the age of 17, and became Petar II, ruler of a savage and remote country sandwiched between the independent Turkish rulers of Mostar and the Pireus. A mountain Sparta, Montenegro (Crna Gora; literally, ‘black mountains’) was a beleaguered wilderness, which had for centuries been a place of constant war and blood feuds. Vengeance, or Osveta, plundering and raiding were the chief stays of the economy. Its landscape was not less exacting; in appearance it has been described by Milovan Djilas as ‘the crucified land’:

The land is one of utter destitution and forlorn silence, its billowing crags engulf all that is alive and all that the humane hand has built and cultivated. [. . .] All is stone. Even all that is human is of stone. Man himself is made of
it – without an ounce of fat, honed down by it all and with his sharp edge turned outward to the whole world. Every evil assails him, and he uses evil to ward off evil, on a soil where even the wild beast has no lair.\textsuperscript{15}

An old story said that, after the creation, God had some rubble left over and he dumped it on Montenegro, and if there was anywhere composed of ‘broken vessels’ it was there. Certainly, it was a high water mark of European culture, where all manner of cultural fragments, pagan, Christian, Orthodox and heretical, had washed up and caught fast in the rocks.

Behind Njegoš’ Episcopal Palace at Cetinje was a ruined tower topped by Turkish heads which corresponded with a tower behind the palace of the Turkish vizier of Mostar which was topped with Montenegrin heads.\textsuperscript{16} Montenegro owed its existence to a harsh balance of forces which constantly had to be maintained, and these forces were measured in heads.\textsuperscript{17}

Njegoš wrote his mystical poem, \textit{The Ray of the Microcosm} (\textit{Luca Mikrokozma}) in 1845, and the dualist elements of the poems almost certainly reflect the unceasing effort of the poet at the time to battle against both the Turks and the feuding tribes of the mountains. Džilas observed that the existence of Montenegro was a constant act of Will and that Njegoš not only created a country, but lived in that creation’ (Džilas, 50). This endless conflict is fiercely depicted, and, indeed, distressingly so, in Njegoš’ great epic ‘play’, \textit{The Mountain Wreath} (\textit{Gorski Vijenac}) (1847), which is as unsparing as the \textit{Iliad} in its portrayal of war. A far more dreadful conflict, however, appears in \textit{The Ray of the Microcosm}.

For the poem not only describes a Hobbesian state of nature on a metaphysical scale, it is infused with a Gnostic pessimism. Its sources are a matter of a great deal of speculation: the dualism of the Eastern Cathars, the Bogomils, Neoplatonism, Origen, the widespread circulation of heretical texts in the Bulgarian Empire and the European part of the Byzantine world, the survival of Dionysian mystery religions in Thrace, the uncertain canon of Biblical texts in early Serbian Orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{18} What is certain is that there are influences of Byron and Shelley, whose works were extensively read by Njegoš, and the tradition of ‘Merkabah’ mysticism. In this tradition, which has its roots in the the Old Testament books of Ezekiel, Chronicles and Ecclesiastes, an inspired individual goes through a passage of ecstasy and ascension, escaping from the miseries of this world, and flying upwards through the Heavenly Spheres (\textit{Hekhalot}; literally, ‘palaces’), past a series of \textit{Archons} and eventually leading to a vision of the Throne of God, His \textit{Merkavah} or ‘Throne-Chariot’. This became an important element of the Jewish Midrash; an active, theurgical process of the interpretation of biblical texts. Examples of Merkabah mysticism are found in a number of Apocryphal texts such as the ‘Testament of Levi’, the ‘Book of the Secrets of Enoch’, the ‘Greek Apocalypse of Baruch’, and the ‘Ascension of Isaiah’ and the ‘Book of Enoch’, many of which were extant in the Byzantine Empire.\textsuperscript{19} In \textit{The Ray of the Microcosm} the protagonist is lost in the darkness of the world. He is addressed by the Ray who seeks to reawaken the memory of the heavenly temple
within him; the whole is reminiscent of Gnosticism, particularly the Mandean Gnosis. The personified ‘Ray’ calls to him with an angelic voice:

Of thine own darkened soul I am the Ray
Of flame immortal; and it is through me
That thou rememberest still what thou hast lost.
What are the shapes of goddesses, created,
By fiery-minded poets of the past?
'Tis I alone that penetrate the dark,
'Tis I alone that reach the heaven’s gates.20

Men are themselves fallen angels sunk in the dark vale of sorrow, subjects of the Creator’s wrath; ‘the victims of unceasing torments sad’:

O’erpowered by oblivion’s sullen sleep,
Thou didst forget thy early bright abode,
The fountains of immortal happiness,
The fields of Paradise, eternal bliss
And thy Creator’s life-maturing glance.
Escape, O spark divine from the embrace
Of the dark power, soar up on radiant wings,
Ablaze with flames of immortality.21

Responding to the call the poet is led by the spark/ray; part guide and genius, part guardian angel, and part Platonic daemon, across six circling heavens, and through as many gleaming galaxies, and in Canto 2 he reaches the Plain of Heaven, which is the result of the vanquishing of ancient foes; the ‘Cradle of Eternity’ is not without memories of ‘ancient conflict’:

The powers of darkness, here they once were broken
And split asunder the giant blocks,
From here they fled out of the realm of being
And sank into the state of woeful death.22

Eventually, the protagonist is vouchsafed a vision of God’s throne and His crown:

Above the throne of thrones there turns on high
In circling, dazzling motion through the air
A ring, like other bright aerial rings
That turn above the thrones of the Archangels;
But this is far greater far a million times.
Myriads of suns are hung on shining locks,
And shed their light throughout the circling ring.
This is the crown of God.23
[. . .] Around the throne-sustaining mountain
Four mounts of sparkling adamant arise,
From where there burst four fountains to the skies
Like giant rays of fire; their columns rise
As high as from our earth to touch the moon,
And reach the utmost heaven-sustaining sphere,
Then, vaulted into rainbows, they spread forth,
O’erarching the four borders of the skies,
And fall into the ocean of the air.\(^24\)

From this throne stream millions of orbits, the constant creation of ideas, music, poetry and light.

As a striking contrast to the beauty and perfection of this realm, in Canto 3 we hear about Creation and more about the powers of darkness that preceded it. God speaks to the Archangel Michael, telling him:

To me alone is subject all that is.
And if my sacred duty I deserted
The reign of darkness should remain for all
Eternity. And orbits numberless,
Unknown to anyone but me, they should
Remain in heavy sleep under the clouds
Of chaos, buried in the depth of gloom.
How much I had to toil ere I freed time
Out of the bondage of the gloomy powers,
And let fly in liberty through space,
The clear bright region of eternity!\(^25\)

Before Creation there was only this:

A frightful huge empire had once extended,
On far, the sad dominion of its gloom.
Its monstrous legions entered heaven’s fields;
The horrid ugliness of such abortions
No one can ev’n imagine but myself.
And only to the sacred mount sublime
And to my throne they did not dare approach –
My fiery looks with horror crushed them all.
Those masses huge, in senseless motion heaving,
Have ever yet been subject to my will.

They often used to sink in horrified
Precipitated flight into th’ abyss,
Their gloomy cradle, on their broken spines.
At times, though rarely, they escaped the rule,
Until I raised the crown above the throne.  
This blow, the first and brightest, crushed their might,  
And split asunder their dark empire.  
Thus, vanquished by the brightness of my crown,  
They hid themselves in crowded multitudes,  
And sank into the void and cold abyss,  
Creating there such dead and woeful shapes  
With taste repulsive and the help of death.  

These entities are defeated, but yet not completely vanquished, and they are only held in place by an almighty act of sustained will. Gradually, God extends the boundaries of the Universe and pushes back the borders of ‘their dumb empire’.  

It is intriguing to speculate whether this disturbing account of the forces which existed outside of God, and which persist even now somewhere in the abyss, is simply a straightforward allegory of the constant struggle of Montenegro against the forces of the Ottoman Turks; or whether, more disturbingly, the poem and the historical conflict are themselves perhaps manifestations of a deeper ontological struggle buried deep in the Balkan psyche, whose wellsprings can be found in the traditions of the Thracian mysteries and Eastern heresy.  

The poem then introduces Satan and his rather secondary account of creation, portrayed as a universal decline and confinement by a tyrannous Divinity rather than the steady victory of light. Having passed through the history of Satan and Adam the poem concludes with prophecy of the complete and utter redemption of the universe; though it is yet to be achieved.

**Archaic man: The Pelasgians**

In Njegoš’ *Ray of the Microcosm*, the primordial precedes Adam who is a comparative latecomer in the cosmic drama, yet his role as the original Man is unchallenged. Things are more difficult in the classical world, whose legends of origin, particularly of the Greeks and their cities, is always a matter of contention. Were the first Greeks autochthonous or did they migrate from elsewhere? Were the founders of Greece Greek at all? Attempting to untangle the provenance of the legendary founders of Athens, Kekrops, Erechtheus and Neth (who all appear to be Egyptian), Bulwer Lytton sadly observed that, ‘by the evidence of all history, savage tribes [including the Greeks] appear to owe their first enlightenment to foreigners.’  

Any enquiry into the origins of Greek culture comes across an exemplary group of aboriginals who, in many ways, set the standard for a mysterious, archaic race. These were the Pelasgians. Their influence on nineteenth-century mythography was profound, and they are important for the way in which myth, mystery religion, and metaphysics developed the idea of the primordial unconscious. Their elusiveness made it possible to develop all manner of connections, and to point to
a time when religion, and the nature of gods or God in particular, had not evolved into dogma or any kind of clear theology.

They appear a number of times in Herodotus, from whose *Histories* it remains quite unclear whether they were barbarous and alien forerunners of the Hellenes, ancestors of the Hellenes, or a race who brought mystery religion and the alphabet to the Aegean from Phoenicia. The Pelasgians exist somewhere between the migratory and the autochthonous, the deepest tradition or its first disruption. They play an essential role in the development of ideas of the primordial and the archaic, as they appear in Creuzer and Schelling, who will be discussed below.

History begins, according to Hegel, with a transgression, and Herodotus begins his history with the abduction of a king’s daughter, Io, and the other women of Argos by Phoenician traders, which led to the war between the Hellenes and the barbarians (here the Persians). Some Hellenes appear to have avenged the abduction by proceeding to Tyre and abducting that king’s daughter. This, in turn, was followed by the abduction of Medea from Asian Colchis, and Paris’s abduction of the Hellene’s Helen. This violent interchange certainly represents the crossing of cultural and social barriers, and the breaching of walls and mores. Most interestingly, this is associated with merchants and trade. Such disruptions are frequently identified with the beginnings of narrative, as Hayden White has argued:

To raise the question of the nature of narrative is to invite reflection on the very nature of culture and, possibly, even on the nature of humanity itself. So natural is the impulse to narrate, so inevitable is the form of narrative for any report of the way things really happened, that narrativity could appear problematical only in a culture in which it was absent – absent or, as in some domains of contemporary Western intellectual and artistic culture, programmatically refused.

Hegel, in the introduction to his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (1837), defined history, not as a record of what happened, but as the narration of what happened and said that ‘the uniform course of events is no subject of serious remembrance’. Only in a state cognizant of laws can distinct transactions take place, ‘accompanied by such a clear consciousness of them as supplies the ability and suggests the necessity of an enduring nature’:

The reality which lends itself to narrative representation is conflict between desire, on the one side, and the law on the other. Where there is no rule of law there can be neither a subject nor the kind of event which lends itself to narrative representation.

The boundary between Hellene and barbarian breaks down, as does that between myth and history, and truth and conjecture. Herodotus distances himself from what he records, and in Book Seven when dealing with the question as to whether
the dealings of the Argives with Xerxes were shameful or not, states: ‘I may be obliged to tell what is said, but I am not at all obliged to believe it’ (Her. 7.152). The evidence for the Pelasgians is even more equivocal. In just a few lines we are told that the Athenians were a Pelasgian people and the Pelasgians once lived with the Athenians; they were distinct in that they spoke a barbarian language but they learned a new language when they became Hellenes (Her. 1.57). In Book 6, Herodotus says that the Athenians gave the Pelasgians land as a payment for having built the Cyclopean wall around the Acropolis. Following this, a dispute broke out and the Pelasgians violated and then abducted Athenian women, and were driven out to Lemnos. There is both difference, the building of social and physical separation, and the rupture of linguistic and racial boundaries.

Added to the uncertain racial status of the Pelasgians, there are their links with the Oracle of Dodona and the Mysteries of Samothrace, which further increase doubts and uncertainties. In the case of Dodona, it was the result of yet one more abduction. The Phoenicians this time abducted two Egyptian priestesses from Thebes. One was taken to Libya where she began the Oracle of Ammon at Siwa, and the other to Western Greece (Her. 2.54–2.56). According to Herodotus, the names of the gods came from Egypt, and it was from the priests at Dodona that Herodotus himself learned the following:

Long ago the Pelasgians, when they made sacrifices, used to pray to the gods, but they could not address prayers to any one of them by name or epithet because they had not yet learned or heard of these. They called them gods because they believed that it was the gods who had ordered and allotted all things. But after the passage of quite a long time, they did learn the names of the gods from Egypt [. . .]. Then they consulted the oracle at Dodona about these names. This oracle, which is thought to be the most ancient of all Greek oracles, was in fact the only one that existed at the time. When the Pelasgians asked this oracle whether they should agree to those names that came from the barbarians, the oracle answered agreeably that they should indeed use them.

(Her. 2.52, 2–3)

Later, the Pelasgians passed on these names to the Hellenes. Thus the gods gained an identity, but nothing more was known of them, their origins or whether they always existed, and what they looked like. The latter qualities were quite recent achievements, according to Herodotus — the contribution of the poets, Hesiod and Homer, who composed a Theogony for the Hellenes.

Thus the primary differentiation of the gods came about on the very fringes of history, before the poets, in the period of the Pelasgians. To understand archaic Hellenic culture and the source of its heroes, gods, and customs, demanded of later classicists that the origin and nature of the Pelasgians should be fully understood as they were somehow at the root of things, and this became a source of dispute in later mythography. Did Herodotus’ account of the Pelasgians mean that
Hellenic culture came from elsewhere, such as Phoenicia, or were the Phoenicians the conduits which led back to Egypt?

**Deep etymology: Creuzer and myth**

One way of establishing the origin of names, gods and peoples was by examining the origin of that name. In antiquity, this was a hit-and-miss method which strained the principle of the similarity of words, paronomasia, to breaking point; for example, the Medes took their name from Medea or the Persians from Persius. This similarity of sounds was thought to be a clinching argument, particularly in the case of peoples who must derive from a founding hero; so the Hellenes were named after Hellen, son of Deucalion. Hellen had two sons, Aeolus and Dorus, from whom came the Aeolians and the Dorians, and two grandsons, Ion and Achaeus, from whom came the Ionians and the Achaeans.

Some ancient commentators, such as Plutarch or Athenaeus, were happy to entertain a number of possible explanations, whereas others, such as Euhemerus or Macrobius, were eager to establish a single principle – that the gods were derived from famous men or were solar in nature. One explanation of the Pelasgians was that they were named after Pelasgus, who was possibly the first Man. This is mentioned by Pausanias, in the eighth book of his *Travels*. Pelasgus was the first king, the inventor of shelter, clothes and food in their most primitive and unattractive manifestation: sheds, sheepskins, and acorns. Pausanias cites the poet Asuis as follows:

> The godlike Pelasgus on the wooded mountains  
> Black earth gave up, that the race of mortals might exist.  

The etymological derivation of the origin of Pelasgians was a particularly important but equally tricky business, as they (in their Phoenician aspect) were associated with the origins of written Greek. Herodotus notes that the Pelasgians had their own language (Her. 1.57), but he can shed little light on it, besides giving it a wide distribution. Because of its claim to primacy, spoken by the Mediterranean version of Adam, it had, and still has, some considerable consequence, and it continues to play a political role, as it is currently claimed to be the ancestor of Illyrian and modern Albanian.

From a fragment of Hyginus, *Fabulae* 277, it seems that Cadmus, a notable Pelasgian, brought the alphabet to Greece from Egypt – Hermes, an Egyptian deity at Saïs, having invented the letter shapes, basing them on the shapes that cranes take in flight. Amongst the numerous etymologies for Pelasgian are included everything from ‘springing from the earth’ and ‘hairy’, to ‘the flat sea’ and ‘neighbour’ or ‘near land’ (πελάς γῆ). The most repeated is the derivation from another bird, the stork; deriving Πελασγός from ‘pelargos’ (πελαργός). The ‘Third Discourse’ of Sir William ‘Oriental’ Jones (1746–1794), presented to the Asiatic Society in Calcutta in February 1786, argued that Sanskrit, Latin,
Greek, and the Gothic and the Celtic languages had a close lexical and grammatical relationship and came from a common source. For Jones, Sanskrit was the more perfect, more finely inflected, and also a sacred language, the language of the Vedas. The origin of the Indo-European language and its gods lay in the East.

This perception was reinforced by Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) in his *On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians (Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier)* (1808), following extensive research on Sanskrit manuscripts in Paris. As the Pelasgians were, admittedly, close to the origin of Greek language and culture, philologically one might expect to find traces of an Indian origin. There was, of course, a strong Semitic case, as there was evidence in Herodotus for Phoenician and Egyptian origins. All such influences were rejected by Karl Otfried Müller (1797–1840), who championed the unique nature of Greek culture. Müller had the temerity to condemn Herodotus for his orientalism, and in his Apollonian *History of Greek Tribes and Cities (Geschichten hellenischer Stämme und Städte)* (1820–1824), Müller’s Caucasian Dions were quite distinct from the Pelasgians and their mystery cults, and were quite free from ‘derivation’. In France, Guillaume Baron de Sainte-Croix (1746–1809) favoured an Egyptian derivation of all rites and mysteries, as did Jörgen Zoega (1755–1809), the Danish-born, German-educated archaeologist.37

In his *Symbolism and Mythology of the Ancient Peoples, especially the Greeks (Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen)* (1810–1812), Georg Friedrich Creuzer brought together and synthesized the contending ideas that the Pelasgians had brought, via Phoenicia, both language, myth and mystery.38 As has already been suggested, the significance of the Pelasgians lay in their position on the edge of language and history, and in a profound sense that their undifferentiated obscurity became their value rather than a source of contention; a ground for the emergence of cultural practices, and also a common point of origin. For, once one had accepted that beginnings were unclear, then the archaic was a source rather than the horizon of investigation. Indeed, such shadowy beginnings became a form of legitimization. Pelasgus, perhaps the first man, and the Pelasgians, became identified with the time where man and culture, language, religion, and myth emerged from Nature. The autochthony was not from a particular geographical location, but from the Earth itself. The subterranean, the primitive, the obscure was for Creuzer the place where matter and spirit were merged, their *Urquell* or primordial spring. From it emerged the symbol, which is primarily an expression of sudden illumination, a mid-point between the World and the Spirit (Creuzer, vol. 1, 63). It acts on the beholder like a lightening flash (*wie ein Blitzstrahl*) that lights up the gloomy night. It is like the play of colours in a rainbow which manifests both sunlight and the Idea against the darkest cloud. It combines unity and differentiation and acts instantaneously; boundless and compact, it is literally a pregnant moment, for it recapitulated the instant of creation with all its potency, it conveyed the meaning of creation, and enjoyed the exuberance of the spring of all things. It was the essence of the revelation of the mysteries which was reputedly so sudden and so complete. Other forms of
religious manifestation – narrative, legends, myth and allegory – were, for Creuzer, inferior. They were slower and less effective. Just as the world is, in Hegel’s words, the Spirit emptied out in time, so the allegory, the myth, was the symbol emptied out in time.

The symbol was, for Creuzer, the essence of a secret priestly teaching which had been brought from the East by a chain formed by the priests of the Pelasgians, the Phoenicians and the Egyptians from the East. It had the most profound associations – a secret doctrine in its highest concentration, imparted at night in hidden subterranean locations, the inverse of the Platonic cave, light in darkness and light from darkness; a perfect instance of the primordial sublime which is one with the depth of our being. It was something for initiates who understood and, indeed, experienced the true meaning of myth.

That the Pelasgian gods were originally nameless, almost undifferentiated, was, Creuzer argued, of the greatest significance; it was both a mystery to be penetrated, and also a sort of negative evidence that they were close to the original ground of religion. Near the commencement of his Mythologie (vol. 1, 4) Creuzer draws a parallel between a passage in Herodotus (discussed above) and a section of Plato’s Cratylus (397 c-d), in which Socrates and Hermogenes are discussing the aptness of the name ‘theoi’ for the gods. Socrates says that this is truly an example of the right name for things ‘that by nature always are’:

It seems to me that the first inhabitants of Greece believed only in those gods in which many foreigners still believe today – the sun, moon, earth, stars, and sky. And seeing that these were always moving or running, they gave them the name ‘theoi’ because it was in their nature to run (thein). Later, when they learned about the other gods, they called them all by that name. 40

From the outset, Creuzer emphasises the source of religious symbols in the forces of Nature, the sun, stars, winds, waves. Yet there is a unified power behind these manifestations and in this respect, as we can see in the interpretation of Plato, there is a movement towards abstraction.

Creuzer then moves on to Proclus’ great interpretive work on Plato, his Platonic Theology:

For those who treat of divine concerns in an indicative manner, either speak symbolically and fabulously, or through images. But of those who openly announce their conceptions, some frame their discourses according to science, but others according to inspiration from the Gods. And he who desires to signify divine concerns through symbols is Orphic, and in short, accords with those who write fables concerning the Gods. But he who does this through images is Pythagoric. 41

What is significant here is the Platonic – indeed, Neoplatonic – cast of Creuzer’s thought. Myth is explained as an allegory of the most philosophic and transcendent
forces which may be more precisely imparted through reason (*nous*) and an exalted philosophic experience. Creuzer is very happy to consider myth through the works of the last commentators and scholiasts of antiquity such as Damascius, Iamblichus, Hermeias, and Syrianus, though he does admit an unease about the anti-Christian sentiments of Plotinus, Proclus, and Porphyry (vol. 1, 52). Creuzer also echoes an essential and increasingly important feature of Neoplatonism, namely Plotinus’ ‘identification of metaphysical realities with states of consciousness’.

Creuzer manages to reconcile philosophic ideas emanating from the highest spheres with illumination rising from the depths, largely by drawing on Neoplatonic commentaries on the mysteries, but in his contemporary and friend, Schelling, this was to become a significant problem. In both Creuzer and Schelling, all of these elements – primordial obscurity, the archaic, the symbolic, the transcendent – were at their most concentrated in the interpretation of the Mysteries of Samothrace.

**The Mysteries of Samothrace I: Creuzer**

Herodotus, when discussing the Pelasgians and the naming of the gods, refers to the link between the Pelasgians and the mysteries of Samothrace. We encounter a double veil: the lack of certainty about the past, and a reluctance to divulge the secrets of the Mysteries. Herodotus is famously reticent concerning the ‘nocturnal rites’ held in the sanctuary of Athena at Sais in Egypt, which he connects with the ritual of the Thesmophoria held annually in honour of Demeter in Athens:

> Now, although I know all the details of these rites, may my reverence ensure that they remain unspoken. I feel the same way about the rite of Demeter which the Hellenes call the Thesmophoria, so may my reverence ensure that they also remain unspoken, except for that which one can say without offence to religion.

(HER. 2.171)

On other matters, however, Herodotus is a little more forthcoming. In Greece, the Athenians were the first to make statues of Hermes with an erect phallus, taking this from Egypt via the Pelasgians, who also took this custom to Samothrace. Herodotus says that whoever has been initiated into the secret rites of the Kabeiroi (or Cabiri) will know what he means: ‘There exists a secret story about Hermes that was told by the Pelasgians; its details are revealed in the mysteries at Samothrace’ (HER. 2.51).

The silence demanded from those who had witnessed the Mysteries was an absolute in antiquity; there are no known accounts of what took place, what was said, what was done, or what was shown at Eleusis, Sais, or Samothrace – only a collection of fragments, rumours, and canards in Patristic works. Alcibiades was one of the few condemned by law for infringing the sacred silence, but such was the strength of the oaths taken and the profound effect of the occasion, or so it...
seems, that secrecy was guaranteed. The Homeric Hymn to Demeter states the absolute nature of the Mysteries which cannot in any way be transgressed, questioned or expressed: 'For the awe of the god stops the voice', and the importance of the rites of Eleusis is clear: ‘Happy is he among men upon earth who has seen these mysteries; but he who is uninitiated and has no part of them never has the lot of like good things once he is dead, down in the darkness and gloom.’

The secrecy may have been partly because what was enacted and the experiences gained were inexpressible, ineffable. The Mysteries had a double effect on later commentators. The first was the desire to penetrate into their profound depths by piecing together clues from fragmentary texts, and then, later, clues from archaeological traces and the evidence of excavation. The second was to invoke secrecy and mystery as a characteristic style of writing, affecting what Edgar Wind once described as a ‘cryptic pomp’. The commentator could suggest that he or she was an initiate and write in a veiled and occult manner; a style that was particularly important in the Renaissance. Often the two were brought together in the composition of elusive fragmentary writing. Whereas, in antiquity, initiation into the Mysteries (particularly on Samothrace) and the Orphic rites was for the many – for slaves as well as for emperors – later there was a turn towards exclusivity; the meaning of the Mysteries was now for the few to understand. Secret meanings and symbols, it was suggested, were passed on from one initiate to another, rather in the manner of Creuzer’s Pelasgian priests.

For his part, Creuzer approached the Mysteries of Samothrace primarily through the Cabiri; by means of etymology and analogy, it was possible to demonstrate their Eastern origin, and its transmission to the Greeks. The primary derivation for *Κάβιροι, Kabiroi*, could be the Semitic *kabirim*, ‘the Great’, close to the Arabic *Ghebr* (Creuzer, vol. 2, 313 et seq.). In many inscriptions on Samothrace later than Creuzer, but also in sources known to Creuzer, the gods of Samothrace are referred to simply as *Μεγάλοι Θεοί*, ‘Great Gods’, pointing to a link with *kabirim* and to the archaic, undifferentiated nature of the deities of the Pelasgians and Hellenes. The Semitic word would point to a possible Phoenician origin, and Creuzer accepts this, tracing it further back and further East to the *Chobar* of Mesopotamia.

Their undifferentiated nature allows Creuzer to explore a primal link between the Cabiri and the forces of nature; they are primordial *Urzustände*, elementary spirits. They are sons of the water – there are particular links between the Cabiri on Samothrace and the Dioscuri, the saviours of seamen. The force of the tide, the wind, fire and the volcanic earth are worshipped in the Cabiri, they are ‘potencies’ (Creuzer, vol. 2, 309) which energise and create, and they may find an analogy in the Deii Potes of archaic Rome (Creuzer, vol. 1, 13). The Cabiri were also worshipped at Lemnos, where they were associated with Aetna and Hephaistos. Creuzer develops a special identification with Herculean, telluric potencies (Creuzer, vol. 2, 309) and the powerful gods of the forge (*die starken Schmiedegötter*), who usually appeared in the form of dwarves. For Creuzer, they are the causal principle and they trigger events (*Anlässe*), they
emerge from the life-engendering warmth of the earth and its mines, to smelt ores and create the weapons for heroes which engender the affairs of men. They are part fire, part mineral, part smith, part energy.

Their effective, urgent nature puts them close to Plato’s derivation of the gods theoi from thein (to ‘run’) – they are always running, they make things run – rather than to Herodotus’ derivation of theoi from theutes, which anticipates the definition of Aristotle, setting in order and allotting. Creuzer connects the Cabiri with a whole range of Dactyls, Cobolds, Telchines, Kuretes, Untergötter across the ancient world – fire brings him to the Parsees, demiurgic forces to Egypt and the god who fashioned the world, ‘Ptah’ (or Ptah). Although Creuzer does not develop the link, certainly Ptah as ‘primeval artificer god’ was accompanied in his task of fashioning the sun egg and the moon egg by eight fellow earth-spirits, the Khnûmû, at the site of the ‘primordial mound’.

Creuzer also makes the link with the seven sons of Syndaxl – or perhaps eight, including Esmur – of Babylonian myth. The numbers are important, or rather their inconclusiveness is, as they point to the vexed problem of the numbering of the Cabiri which appears in Goethe’s Faust: Part Two. Were they so undifferentiated that they could not even be counted?

Creuzer’s ideas on the primordial energies emerging from the underworld reflect the fascination with mines and a sort of mystical mineralogy in the Romantic period in Germany. It may have received its initial impetus from Emmanuel Swedenborg, but it can be found in, for example, E. T. A. Hoffmann’s ‘The Mines at Falun’ (Die Bergwerke zu Falun) (1819), Novalis’s Heinrich von Ofterdingen (1802), and Ludwig Tieck’s ‘The Old Man of the Mountain’ (Der Alte vom Berge) (1828). Both Goethe and Novalis had mining responsibilities in their career, and the mining region of Ilmenau features in Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre (1821; 1829). As Theodore Ziolkowski has extensively shown in his German Romanticism and its Institutions, the mine became an image of the soul, and as such it appears later in Rilke:

That was the strange unfathomed mine of souls.
And they, like silent veins of silver ore,
were winding through its darkness. Between roots
welled up the blood that flows on to mankind,
like blocks of heavy porphyry in the darkness.

The underworld is filled with rude antediluvian bones, a treasure house of ore and precious gems, and forests of silver and gold trees rooted in crystal. There was a proto-scientific belief that mineral nature had powers of growth, veins of ore were like veins of blood in animal life, leaf-shaped patterns could be found in rocks, and crystals were akin to stars. The secrets of the primal plant (or Urpfplanze), the primal animal (or Urtier), and the primal stone (or Urstein) could be discovered in the depths. Descending into the black labyrinths of the earth and exploring caverns was a journey back to the archaic, which was still at work with a daemonic
magical force; just as the eyes of the explorer become accustomed to the dark, gradually one could ‘acquire the power of reading in the stones, the gems, and the minerals, the mirroring of secrets which are hidden above the clouds’. There was a dark hermetic equivalence, the principle of ‘as below, so above’:

You miners are almost astrologers in reverse. […] Whereas they gaze incessantly at the heavens and stray through those immeasurable spaces, you turn your gaze into the earth and explore its structure. They study the powers and influence of the constellations, and you investigate the powers of rocks and mountains and the manifold effects of the strata of the earth and rock. To them the sky is the book of the future, while to you the earth reveals monuments of the primeval world.

Creuzer’s Cabiri more than merely inhabit this underworld: they are its active forces, emerging from its rocks and stones to smelt and hammer out the world. Recent excavations at Samothrace have confirmed Creuzer’s intuitions. Close by the central hall of the Mysteries, the Hieron, has been found the site of a forge and a place for smelting iron. Those who had been initiated in the Mysteries were given an iron magnetic ring to wear, whose rhapsodic, magnetic powers are described by Proclus and in Plato’s Ion (533d–534e). These rings were sacred to the cult of the Mother of the Rocks, whose places of worship are particularly associated with outcrops of porphyry such as are found on Samothrace. The ore for the iron rings was mined near the Sanctuary of the Great Gods.

There existed only one real clue to the identity of the Great Gods and this is found in a note by an Alexandrian Scholiast on Apollonius Rhodius. Mnaseas of Patrae, an historian of the third century BCE, is said to have recorded that the gods’ names are Axieros, Axiokersa, Axiokersos, with a fourth, Kasmilos. Mnaseas identifies the first three with Demeter, Persephone and Hades. Creuzer was aware of this source (Creuzer, vol. 2, 320), though his interpretation is different. For him, Axieros (Ἀξιέρος) was the ‘magnipotens’ Hephaistos; Axiokersos (Ἀξιόκερσος), ‘the great fecundator/inseminator’, is associated with Ares and the Egyptian planet ‘Hertos’; Axiokersa (Ἀξιόκερσα), the ‘magna fecundatrix’, is Aphrodite. Finally, Kasmilos (Κασμίλος) is the ‘perfecte sapiens’ (or, der Allweise), related to the heroes Cadmus and Hermes. Why there is this divergence from Mnaseas is unclear, but the fourth figure is almost conjectural, though in line with the views of Herodotus on the Mysteries and the phallic Hermes. Creuzer identifies the four figures with potency, both sexual and physically creating, and says that they are part of the secret teaching of religious symbols (die Priestlehre esoterischen Charakters) (Creuzer, vol. 2, 312–13). The lack of differentiation and mystery enables a wide (and sometimes ungraspable) series of associations, and the Great Gods are the force that is manifest in that diversity.

The Cabiri appear in the scene entitled ‘Classical Walpurgisnacht’ (Klassische Walpurgisnacht) in Goethe’s Faust: Part Two, featuring amongst a host of marginal, vestigial mythological entities: lamiae, sphinxes, sirens, nereids,
emmetts, and dactyls. Their uncertain nature conveys what Anthony Phelan has
described as the ‘ontologically unstable’ characterisation in this scene.\textsuperscript{58} In it, the
Cabiri are associated with Cranes and Pygmies, and Goethe anticipates more
recent archaeological discoveries at Thebes on the mysteries of the Cabiri where
pottery fragments show the Cabiri and the Pelasgian cranes and pygmies.\textsuperscript{59}
Goethe’s setting for the passage on the Cabiri is a marine one – ‘The Rocky Inlets
of the Aegean Sea’. Besides alluding to the role of the Cabiri as the gods of
sailors, rescuing them from a watery grave and assuaging Neptune’s rage, it also
supports their Protean nature. Not only is there the problem of their uncertain
quantity (three or four? – seven or eight?), there is also the problem of their inde-
terminate being. The Sirens reflect that the Cabiri of Samothrace

\begin{quote}
Are Gods in the strangest setting,
Ever evolving themselves anew,
And never aware of their own nature.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textit{Sind Götter! wundersam eigen,}
\textit{Die sich immerfort selbst erzeugen}
\textit{Und niemals wissen, was sie sind.}\textsuperscript{60}
\end{quote}

Their qualities are very powerful; they are entities who are tiny, mighty, and eter-
nally unappeasable:

\begin{quote}
These incomparable ones
Ever wanting
Yearning, hungry
For the unattainable.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textit{Diese Unvergleichlichen}
\textit{Wollen immer weiter,}
\textit{Sehnsuchtsvolle Hungerleider}
\textit{Nach dem Unerreichlichen.}\textsuperscript{61}
\end{quote}

In a letter to Creuzer dated 1 October 1817, Goethe reproached the mythographer
for having forced him to confront ‘Orphic darknesses’ and
to glimpse a region which I am ordinarily at pains to avoid. [. . .] When the
passion for delving into these mysteries goes so far as to link the Hellenic
sphere of god and man with the remotest regions of the earth [. . .] our
suffering becomes acute and we hasten to take refuge again in Ionia.\textsuperscript{62}

Creuzer was certainly the source of much of the material on the Cabiri in \textit{Faust},
but the notion that they were ‘shadows of the shining Olympians’, their yearning,
ever emerging and willing force, and their uncanny setting on Samothrace owe
much to another thinker – to Friedrich Schelling.
The Mysteries of Samothrace II: Schelling

Schelling begins his *On the Deities of Samothrace* (*Über die Gottheiten von Samothrake*) (1815) with the island itself; it has a primordial life of its own like Delos, rising out of the northern part of the Aegean. It is the embodiment of volcanic processes, the product of ‘a great convulsion of nature’ (*große Naturerschütterungen*), the site of the Flood where the waters of the Mediterranean poured through to inundate the area which is now the Black Sea. The oldest legends of the island express ‘the ever present awe of a vast and mighty nature’ and ‘the terror of its memories’ (DS, 15). From the single peak of the island Poseidon, himself a god of earthquake and subterranean thunder, surveyed the convulsion of the Trojan War (see *Iliad*, book 13, 10–14); the human, mythic, geological energies merge as a single entity.

The description of the island manifests the central ideas of *Naturphilosophie* which Schelling had developed in his earlier *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* (*Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur*) (1797). In this work, Schelling put forward an organic, interrelated vision of Nature in which all phenomena and forces, observer and observed, spirit and matter, were parts of the same process of development. The argument sought to overcome (or, in a profound sense, undermine) the transcendent separations, identified by Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, which appeared to have severed forever the link between man and things (*Ding an sich*) and his own innermost Self. Schelling attempted to look beneath and within phenomena, and to penetrate the noumenal world that lay beyond the categories of conscious perception. Both the world and the mind that observed it were generated from a single source whose manifestations they were; enjoying a sort of ontological kinship, they had *au fond* a single, underlying identity. This generation of the cosmos was active and ongoing, and here Schelling anticipated the notion of evolution, the ‘infusion of time into Nature’. Drawing on Spinoza’s notion of nature as a process, *natura naturans*, Schelling developed a dynamic idea of the cosmos in which Nature and Nature’s God – the two are one – emerged from a dark origin driven by a longing for spiritual awareness and consciousness; the inchoate always seeking form and substance. Necessarily, this view meant a turn towards a consideration of archaic pre-conscious forces which emerged in dreams and in myth; and it involved a consideration of the irrational which underlay all things, both mental and physical, and was on its way to becoming rational and self-aware.

The development of the argument itself (and, indeed, the philosopher) also followed this pattern of universal *Bildungsroman*, and was part of the cosmic process. In fact, Ernst Benz in his essay ‘Theogony and Transformation in Schelling’ (1964) argues that the entire Schelling opus should be treated as a single organic process of Bildung, and that his work represents an attempt to ‘encompass the whole development of mankind in metaphysical terms’. Robert J. Richards, too, in his *The Romantic Conception of Life* (2002), suggests that the early titles of Schelling’s works – from *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, via *On
The archaic and the sublimity of origins

The World Soul: A Hypothesis of the Higher Physics for the Clarification of Universal Organicity (Von der Weltseele: Eine Hypothese der höheren Physik der Erklärung des allgemeinen Organismus) (1798), to First Sketch of a System of Nature Philosophy (Erster Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie) (1799) – map such a process: ‘These tracts reflected the rapid evolution of Schelling’s changing conceptions of nature and the philosophical approach to it,’ he writes, for ‘each title suggests an effort still in the process of becoming (Ideas for... a hypothesis of... First sketch of...), a conception not having achieved completion, indeed, a Romantic adventure.’

Schelling’s virtual exploration of the island of Samothrace was one such adventure, a textual equivalent of Goethe’s Italian journey and Alexander von Humboldt’s exploration of South America: a process of self-discovery. In the Jena circle of Schleiermacher, the Schlegels, Tieck, Novalis, and Schelling there was a great interest in ‘spiritual geography’. Novalis explored the islands of the mind with the same rapture as Keats did his ‘realms of gold’:

I have been on a journey of discovery, or on my pursuit [...] and have chanced upon promising coastlines which perhaps circumscribe a new scientific continent. This ocean is teeming with fledgling islands.

Samothrace itself is a little more forbidding. Nevertheless, however dark its energies, it does, in Schelling’s account, manifest the same compound of elements found in the Romantic vision of Nature, in which all the sciences and arts, chemistry, magnetism, botany, philology, geology, mythology and theology, are all parts of the same process of emerging. In his celebrated equation from the Introduction to Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature, Schelling stated: ‘Nature is visible Spirit, Spirit is invisible Nature.’ Here, in this compressed fragment of Identitätsphilosophie, we find an expression of the unity of the material and the spiritual; physical substance is a concatenation of the spirit, and spirit is a volatilised substance.

The island is the site in which one is transformed into another, and Schelling is drawn to the ‘mysterious’ and ‘most ancient cult’ of Samothrace. ‘Together with the secret history of the gods,’ he wrote, ‘Greece first received from the forests of Samothrace the belief in a future life’ (DS, 15). The ‘most sacred island’ was a place of confession, purification, and the evolution of the spirit, associated with Pythagoras and the initiation of both Emperors (such as Hadrian) and slaves. Demeter, Dionysos, Hermes and Zeus were all worshipped as Cabiri.

Like Creuzer, Schelling relies on the fragmentary reference to the island gods by the Scholiast Mnaseas for the actual naming of the Cabiri, but he favours a different allocation of gods, or goddesses, than Creuzer: Axieros/Demeter; Axiokersa/Persephone; Axiokersos/Hades; and the conjectural fourth, Kasmilos/Hermes. Schelling develops a Phoenician/Egyptian derivation of the names, though he shows great caution when contemplating ‘the hazardous path’ of philology. His criticism of past philological exercises reads like an anti-Naturphilosophie; a malign, rather than benign, identification: ‘A new frenzy of
linguistic derivations struggled to produce everything from everything and mixed all things together is a crazy manner, even in the old stories of the gods’ (DS, 18).

For the word ‘Cabiri’ itself, Schelling goes along with Creuzer’s Phoenician/Hebrew origin, \textit{Kabirim}, signifying ‘the great’, fitting in with the notion of ‘the Great Gods’. Axieros has as its meaning ‘yearning’, ‘hunger’, ‘need’ (\textit{Armuth, Schmachten, Sucht}). Axieros is the first being, desolate and yet promising the world in abundant fullness; it has ‘the greatest need insofar as it has nothing to which it can communicate itself’, for ‘in the concept of every beginning lies the concept of a lack’ (\textit{daß im Begriff jedes Anfängs der Begriff eines Mangels liegt}) (DS, 18).

Schelling links this observation with Diotima’s account of the birth of Eros in the \textit{Symposium} (203 a–d). Eros is the child of Poros (Resourcefulness) and Penia (Poverty); Love will find a way to fulfil its need. Schelling finds the raw material for Plato’s dialogue in one version of the Orphic myth of creation – Eros being the first god to emerge from the World Egg. Before the Egg there is and was only Night, and the most archaic foundation is Night (DS, 18):

For it was the teaching of all peoples who counted time by nights that the \textit{night} is the most primordial of things in all of nature [. . .]. But what is the essence of night, if not lack, need, and longing [\textit{Mangel, Bedürftigkeit und Sehnsucht}]? For this night is not darkness, not the enemy of the light, but it is the nature looking forward to the light, the night longing for it, eager to receive it.

(DS, 18)

Schelling then turns to another image of first Nature (\textit{erste Natur}), whose essence is desire and passion. This is fire – a consuming fire, whose essence is nothing but a hunger which draws everything into itself. Schelling now reverses the usual allegorical philosophic interpretation of mythology, tracing back the gods to physical forces, a practice that was common in antiquity (for example, the \textit{Saturnalía} of Macrobius, in which every myth was traced back to the Sun). Instead, Schelling starts with the nameless forces of Night and fire, and marks their manifestations as gods and goddesses; there is no space for derivation.

Fire is embodied in the figure of Hestia, the goddess of the hearth, which represents the subduing of fire. The philosopher also makes a link between these forces and Demeter, as she appears in the first part of the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, frantically searching for her lost daughter, Proserpine (or Persephone), who has been abducted by Hades ‘in deep and insatiable hunger’. Demeter appears at Eleusis obscured by a dark veil and disguises herself as an old nurse. She is offered hospitality by the daughter of Keleos, to whom she identified herself as ‘Dorso’.\textsuperscript{68} Schelling, here, rather relies on the reader’s knowledge of the poem, and the specific occasion when Demeter begins to nurse the infant son of the household, Demophoön, whom she passes each night through the fire of the hearth in order to make him immortal.
He proceeds to an identification of fire, yearning, night and the goddess Demeter. Hunger is the strongest aspect; it characterises the shades, ‘the seeking-ones’ in the underworld, who are desperate for life: ‘For the burning desire must precede the satisfied desire, and the greatest receptivity, thus consuming hunger, must precede the abundant fullness of fecundity’ (DS, 19). The ravenous world is condemned to starve, before the return of Proserpine (Persephone), and the re-emergence of Demeter. Schelling proceeds to connect this overmastering emotion with a Phoenician creation myth of ‘great antiquity’:

First there was the breathing of a dark atmosphere and a turbid chaos, in itself entirely boundless. But when the spirit of love was kindled in the presence of the special beginning, and a contraction [of the two] resulted, this bond was called longing and it was the beginning of the creation of all things.

(DS, 19–20)

How might this be linked to Samothrace? Pliny mentions a statue of Pothos, or ‘longing’, on the island (see *Naturalis Historia*, book 36, chapter 5, §25), and so Schelling finds some evidence as to the nature of Axieros/Demeter. At the same time, it should be noted that the distinction between forms of desire, Eros and Pothos, is as important as the pagan and Christian distinction between the two forms of love: Agape and Eros. In a long footnote, Schelling carefully observes the distinction and criticises Creuzer for confusing Eros and Pothos. Pothos is a longing for an absent good, a loss, whereas Eros is the initial kindling of the desire which precedes possession.

Schelling seems to be developing a theogony of desire – a temporalised sequence of the emergence of yearning that matches the generations of the gods in Hesiod. It is a deixis of desire; Eros is the desire for something in the future, Pothos for something in the past, and Himeros (Ἱμεροϛ) a desire for that which lies in the present – thus anticipating Bergsonian vitalism and a present made up of retention and protention. In this connection, Schelling cites *De primis principlis*, one of the last works of antiquity, written by Damascius, the last Head of the Platonic Academy in Athens before it was closed by the Emperor Justinian in 529 CE. In his account of creation myths, Damascius could look back over the entire world of antiquity and all of its mythic and religious systems. According to Damascius, the Sidonians posited Time before all else, followed by Desire and Gloom; a truly sublime obscurity. In a remarkably long footnote – and in his preface, he apologises for the fact that the footnotes are longer than the main text which rises above them like a flower above a rhizome – Schelling conjectures the whole development of the nature of Time, moving from Damascius back to Zoroastrianism. According to the Zend-Avesta, ‘the true creator is time, which knows no limits, has nothing over it, has no root, and both has been and will be eternal’ (DS 33, n. 44). In his gloss on this passage, Schelling entertains the idea of a sort of temporal pantheism, arguing that ‘Time’ which permeates all things is not a ‘mere eternity’; it is a limitless time in which unity and difference are
established as one (DS 33, n. 44). One of Kant’s major forms of intuition is
harnessed to identify the categories with the noumenal itself.

In his interpretation of the second, third and fourth Cabiri, Axiokersa,
Axiokersos, and Kasmilos (or Kadmilos), Schelling appears to be moving towards
a Neoplatonic and Orphic understanding. For he identifies the first three as
follows: Axieros is Demeter, Axiokersa her daughter, Persphone, and Axiokersos,
Dionysos; thus, the major gods of the Eleusinian and Orphic mysteries are brought
together. Cadmilus is, for Schelling, an adjunct to the primary three, an interstitial
entity which links the primary three with the next three. This makes seven Cabiri
in all, an upper and lower triad with Kasmilos/Hermes as messenger of the gods
who mediate between different realms of creation, the heavens, the earth and the
underworld. The vestigial eighth Cabir may be a further linking principle, though
this is not made clear.

The very real difficulty of Schelling’s text at this point appears to stem from the
unacknowledged problem which stems from attempting to reconcile three
different accounts of creation from antiquity, which may be gleaned from the
discussion of time and the typology of desire.

First, there is the idea of an underlying primordial hypostasis which is
unchanging, ever present in phenomena as a founding principle. This idea is
found in such pre-Socratics as Thales, who argued that the material principle of
water is the arche of everything; or Anaximenes, who claimed it is air; or even the
later Stoic notion of fire, the physical world being but ‘curdled smoke’. Though
superficially changing, the universe is at least ever present or, in some accounts,
eternal.71

Second, according to the Neoplatonic concept of emanation, which proceeds
downwards from the ineffable transcendent Principle, there is a movement of
increasing differentiation, through a descending series of triads. It should be
emphasised that the transcendent principle has no need, being utterly contained
and self-sufficient; it does not desire creation in any way (see Plotinus, ‘On the
Three Hypostases’, in his fifth Ennead). On an abstract level there is the Triad of
the primary hypostases: the One, the Intellect (nous), and Soul (psyche). Below
this, Proclus identifies another five descending levels.72

And third, there is an evolution upwards from a primal matrix towards greater
and greater differentiation and clarity. Thus Hesiod’s Theogony, like other
theogonies, was seen as a pattern of increasing clarification and refinement from
the horrors of Chaos, through Erebos and Night, the monstrous Titans, Cronos,
and up to Zeus and the shining Olympians – the first in beauty should be first in
might. Following this notion of an upward path, the Homeric world is seen as a
model of order and clarity compared with the obscure mystery which preceded it.

Now it would seem that the Cabiri are an early stage in the third of these
ontologies, energies embodying a primitive yearning for creation and expressing
the primordial lack. Yet, in the comparatively short section allocating the second,
third, and fourth Cabiri, Schelling describes the Cabiri as primitive reflections of
the eternal gods. He seems to be agreeing with Goethe, with whom he certainly
discussed the matter. Kasmilos moves between ontologies as much as he traffics between levels:

As servant of the great gods, Camillus [or Kasmilos] is not necessarily servant of those first three. But it is established that he simultaneously served the lower and the higher gods. Hence he served the former only insofar as he was the mediator between them and the higher, and thus himself was higher than they. [. . .] This is the most essential concept of Hermes, to be the governing bond between the higher and lower gods.

(DS, 22)

It seems that, for Schelling, it is the principle of identity itself that mediates cosmically, epistemologically, and theologically across those rifts that Naturphilosophie sought to bridge – thought and matter, observer and observed, the gods and Man. Here, Schelling confronts the following problems: Why are the gods plural, and why is their differentiation important? Why not just believe in a god of gods, a transcendent unity rather than mere fractions? While admitting that it is necessary when researching archaic gods to harmonise the multiplicity of divine natures with the indelible idea of the unity of God, he draws back from emanation cosmology:

But it is neither suitable and clear in itself to represent the diverse gods as merely emanations of One into them, as a primal power propagating itself into diverse rays; nor can its indeterminateness and boundlessness be compatible as well with the determinateness and sharpness of the outlines of every individual form, as also with the limited number of these forms.

(DS, 23)

Schelling asserts that, if such a view of an irradiating One were conveyed at the Mysteries, then this would be inimical to belief; why worship the ‘radiations’ when it is possible to direct one’s reverence to the immediate One? Schelling reverses the process, so that, instead of top-down, the movement is bottom-up:

It is an entirely different matter if the various gods be not downward-proceeding, ever more self-attenuating emanations of a highest and superior deity; if instead they be gradations of a lowest power lying at the basis, which are all finally transfigured in One highest personality.

(DS, 23)

The gods are thus rungs on a ladder, which rises up ever higher. To conclude Schelling’s study, there follows a double movement, one towards abstraction and the other towards energy. Following a Platonic-Pythagorean model, Schelling considers the mathematical aspect of the Cabiri. The four Samothracian deities form a series ascending from below, as numbers do. Kasmilos is the way to a doubling of the series; and the following group of three
or four are known collectively as Haephestos, combining as a sort of indefinite group demiurge. Rather like Creuzer, he links the Cabiri to the Phoenician and Egyptian pygmy gods. The latter are essentially phallic in nature, as Schelling modestly hints, referring to ‘crude yet candid idol sculptures’ (DS, 23). The dwarf, Zwerg in German (Old German: Tuwerg), is from the same root as the Greek theurgos, which denotes a being of magical power. The Cabiri thus can stand as energies or potencies that, in part, create and, in part, open the way to higher levels as they ‘practise the magic by which the transcendent is drawn into reality’ (DS, 28). The Cabiri, or so it seems in Schelling’s interpretation, make the three levels of interpretation possible; as changeless mathematical forms, as the access to higher levels, and as energised forces burning upwards from below. But the preferred way is from the ground upwards.

Schelling even hazards a guess as to the nature of the initiate meaning of the Mysteries of Samothrace:

The holy, revered teaching of the Cabiri, in its profoundest significance, was the representation of insoluble life itself as it progresses in a sequence of levels from the lowest to the highest, a representation of the universal magic and of the theurgy ever abiding in the whole universe, through which the invisible, indeed the super-actual, incessantly is brought to revelation and actuality.

(DS, 29)

Here, the rising and falling motions (and, perhaps, no motion at all) become in Schelling’s thought interfused, as in the higher doctrine of Neoplatonism; Proclus had observed of the original triad that they all have the qualities of the uniform and intelligible: ‘the abiding, and the proceeding, and the returning’ (On the Theology of Plato, book 3, chapter 14). Schelling always favours the proceeding, as he strongly favours a positive theology, which says what the godhead is, rather than a negative theology, which says what it is not. He also favours process over frozen and abiding, permanent a priori truths (as Robert Brown emphasises in his ‘Philosophical Interpretation’ of the treatise) (see DS, 58). Always there is an enthusiasm for effectiveness which, at its highest, is disinterested ordering, and, at its lowest, urges and desires.

All of these levels again come together in Schelling’s idea of the ‘Potencies’ in his dynamically redrafted, necessarily incomplete work The Ages of the World (Die Weltalter), which occupied the philosopher from 1811 to 1815. His treatise On the Deities of Samothrace was in some sense a parallel text, an illustration, a concretisation of the abstract ontology of the world ages. But, before turning to Die Weltalter, it is helpful to consider C. G. Jung’s encounters with the Cabiri.

**Jung and the Cabiri**

The appearance of Jung’s Symbols and Transformations of the Libido (Symbole und Wandlungen der Libido) (1911–1912) established the grounds for his break
with Freud. One important element of this break was a re-evaluation of the libido; was it simply sexual energy, or something wider and greater? Jung’s consideration of the meaning of the Cabiri is an essential part of this re-evaluation, and prefaces the analysis of the transformation of the libido which forms the second part of the book. These passages were taken over, virtually unchanged, into the revised second edition, published in 1952 as *Symbols of Transformation* (Symbole der Wandlung) (whereas other sections underwent drastic revision). In his treatment of the Cabiri, Jung clearly draws on Creuzer, whom he cites later in the text, but there are also clear signs of the influence of Schelling (and, through Schelling, Jakob Böhme). Werner Leibbrand has asserted that Jung’s teachings are ‘not intelligible if they are not connected with Schelling’, and perhaps, with hindsight, it might be possible to argue that Jung is really a late member of the Schelling School of philosophy.  

Jung examines the nature of the phallus and its relation with creative divinity. The phallus is the creative dwarf which toils away in secret, working in darkness. Jung associates this with Faust’s ‘descent to the Mothers’ and also Hephaistos, Wieland the Smith, dactyls, Tom Thumb, and the Cabiri. These mysterious chthonic gods are represented as ugly and deformed – the limp of Hephaistos – and Jung illustrates his text with vase paintings from the Cabirion at Thebes which portray the Cabiri as grotesque pygmies. Jung here draws attention to Herodotus’ disclosure that the Pelasgians brought the cult of the ithyphallic Hermes to Samothrace, and he moves from the creative (and patently sexual) force of the Cabiri and their uncertain number to argue that the libido is not exclusively a sexual force, as maintained by Freud.

To do so, Jung quotes Cicero’s *Tusculan Disputations* which distinguishes between delight concerned with present good and desire associated with future good; if the pursuit of the good is pursued with moderation and prudence this is called will, ‘but when it is divorced from reason and is too violently aroused, then it is “libido” or unbridled desire’.  

Lasciviousness, pleasure, want, wish – Jung finds a whole series of associations and variations of the libido, and digs up a host of philological parallels (Sanskrit, Gothic, Old Bulgarian) to show that the meanings of libido can arise from violent longing. These are rapid and violent semantic shifts. Yet Jung’s sudden conclusion that it all has to do with psychic energy becomes less hurried and, indeed, more intelligible when read in tandem with Schelling’s differentiation of desire (Eros, Pothos and Himeris), but, as I shall argue below, the true source of the varieties of longing may be found in the visionary writings of Böhme.

The Cabiri appear in the ‘Liber Secundus’ of Jung’s *Red Book* or *Liber Novus*. This secret book – built up over many years from material revealed in dreams, meditations, active imagination, visions, and material circulated through three preceding Black Books, with its mandalas, calligraphy, and paintings – is not simply a record; it is an activity, like the Great Work of the alchemists, lasting over the second decade of the twentieth century. The Red Book is truly theurgic in Schelling’s sense, building up from subterranean darkness to greater and greater
Theorizing the archaic articulation, not through conscious decision, but through the use of energies, symbols, and potencies.  

In the ‘Liber Secundus’ of the Red Book there is an encounter with the Cabiri, who are described as having ‘delightful misshapen forms’ and as ‘young and yet old’. They are interrogated as to their emergence from the ‘egg of the gods’, and the narrator figure specifically asks the Cabiri if they are the earthly feet of the godhead, in response to which they declare:

We carry what is not to be carried from below to above. We are the juices that rise secretly, not by force, but sucked out of inertia and affixed to what is growing. We know the unknown ways and the inexplicable laws of living matter. We carry up what slumbers in the earthly, what is dead and yet enters into the living. We do this slowly and easily, what you do in vain in your human way. We complete what is impossible for you.

The Cabiri create a foundation, they form the tower which grows up from inside from the labyrinths, from the chthonic. In Creuzer and Schelling, the Cabiri are potencies, energies of a mysteriously productive Nature, the shadowy adumbrations of separate names and specific identities. Similarly, in Jung, they are the vital forces of the unconscious which underlie the separation of spirit and matter, nature and reason. In Jung, they are slightly more conscious than Goethe’s Cabiri, ‘never aware of their own nature’ and ‘ever evolving themselves anew’. 

Schelling had already attempted to articulate the full signification of such mythic potencies and their primordial ground in his Die Weltalter; a task that was to prove almost impossible.

Schelling: The ages of the world

In the Romantic group at Jena there was a particular interest in employing mathematics as a philosophic and symbolic system in the manner of Pythagoras or Proclus’ Commentary on Euclid. The mathematical notion of potentisation, raising to a higher power, could be – and, in Jena, was – a metaphor of metaphysical ascent. In a famous passage by Novalis, we find the equation between potentisation and romanticising:

The world must be romanticized. This yields again its original meaning. Romanticizing is nothing else than a qualitative potentization. In this operation the lower self becomes identified with a better self. Just as we ourselves are a potential series of this kind. This operation is still entirely unknown. By giving the common a higher meaning, the everyday a mysterious semblance, the known the dignity of the unknown, the finite the appearance of the infinite, I romanticize it – For what is higher, unknown, mystical, infinite, one uses the inverse operation – in this manner it becomes logarithmicized. It receives a common expression.
This ‘reciprocal raising and lowering’ follows the Neoplatonic trajectories of
descent and ascent known as ‘the process’. Such potentiation can act on a
humble word, raising it to a proposition, which can, in turn, be raised to a science.
Similarly (and significantly), thinking and dreaming can be subject, according to
Novalis, to qualitative potentiation:

Thinking in the ordinary sense of the word, is thinking of thinking –
Comparing etc. different specific thoughts. Direct dreaming – reflected
dreaming – potentized dreaming.\(^8_2\)

The central causative idea of potency, the idea of an energetic force that brings
about qualitative as well as quantitative change, and possesses the power to create,
has its foundation in Book Delta of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. Aristotle’s ‘poten-
tial’ is dynamic, life-giving and associated with process. Without such a capacity,
things are inert, compressed, and they cannot be raised to a final end (*telos*). Such
potencies are essentially transitive, working and having the capacity to work in a
created world of acts, events, things, and individual entities. There subsists a
causal chain of interlinked activity, but it is difficult to trace this back to an origi-
nal cause that contained the capacity for the emergence of the whole to time and
the cosmos. This tracing is essentially negative, for one is returning to that which
essentially requires no capacity of its own, no movement, no change, no place. . .
It is potentially all things and nothing.

Schelling takes on this challenge in his *Die Weltalter*, a work which was also a
product of a process of reworking over a number of years, from 1811 to 1815, and
it remained unfinished as it attempted to express the inexpressible, and describe
that which precedes language and the world.\(^8_3\) The treatise *On the Deities of
Samothrace* was the mythic side of a complete project, the realisation of the ideas
of *Die Weltalter* in a more plastic form.

The study of the world is a matter of time, and science, Schelling asserts, is a
species of history, seeking to present the actual living essence, the primordially
alive, the essence preceded by no other, the first, the oldest of essences. Philosophy,
for its part, tries to overstep the boundaries of present time in seeking that essence,
and retracing ‘the long path of developments from the present back into the
deepest night of the past’ (*W*, 114). Man alone seeks to do this, because he is
drawn from the source of things; he is akin to it, and to the eternal essence.

In a way similar to Rousseau in his *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*
(1755), Schelling returns to the original ground by avoiding the impossible task of
tracing back through time; instead, the archaic and, indeed, the primordial are
accessible through introspection. The primal man is within and ‘the unfathom-
able, prehistoric age rests in this essence’ (*W*, 114). We must turn to ‘the inner
oracle’; the only witness to ‘a time before the world’ (*W*, 114). The ‘archetypal
images of things’ (*Urbilder*) slumber within and can be awakened through a
process of inner dialogue which seems a cross between anamnesis and Jung’s
interrogation of the Cabiri; indeed, according to Schelling, one comes to one’s
inner identity through the conscious interrogation of the unconscious, and ‘everything remains incomprehensible to man until it has become inward for him’ (W, 116).

Thus, to move backward and inward and to the essential are one and the same; and by doing this, one is renewed by the primordial, which seems to be part hypostasis, and part primordial unconscious. New life comes from the most archaic, for ‘Man is rejuvenated time and again and becomes blessed anew through the feeling of unity of his nature’ (W, 117). Schelling’s own treatise is partly scientific, partly philosophical, and partly theosophic; and these studies are also revivified by the return to the ontological roots:

Science has no longer begun with thoughts drawn from far away in order to descend from these to the natural; rather, it is now the reverse: beginning with the unconscious presence \( \text{bewußlosen \ Daseyn} \) of the Eternal, science leads up to the supreme transfiguration in a divine consciousness. The supersensible thoughts now acquire physical force and life, while nature for its part becomes ever more the imprint of the highest concepts.

(W, 119)

The entire enquiry thus becomes itself a potentiation, and the physical world becomes worthy of the highest consideration; it cannot be passed over and scorned; indeed, ‘the stone the builders rejected becomes the cornerstone’ (W, 119). Nevertheless, there is still a place for rejection; Schelling asserts that it is only the man who has the strength ‘to rise above himself’ who is able to create a true past and becomes able ‘to savour’ the present and look forward to the future. This is difficult both to perform and to understand, but resistance is the secret of change, for it is the negativity which makes the variety of the world possible. Once accomplished, it becomes clear that

\[ \text{everything that surrounds us points back to a past, to a past of incredible grandeur. The oldest formations of the earth bear such a foreign aspect that we are hardly in a position to form a concept of their time of origin or of the forces that were then at work. We find the greater part of them collapsed in ruins, witness to a savage devastation. More tranquil eras followed, but they were interrupted by storms as well, and lie buried with their creations beneath those of a new era. In a series from time immemorial, each era has always obscured its predecessor, so that it hardly betrays any sign of an origin; an abundance of strata – the work of thousands of years – must be stripped away to come at last to the foundation, to the ground.} \]

(W, 121)

We are reminded here not only of Shelley and Byron and their cancelled cycles, but also of the more melancholy sensibility of an age that habitually visited, painted, mourned over, and wrote on and in ruins; an age infused as it was with
the Comte de Volney’s *Les Ruines, ou Méditation sur les révolutions des empires* (1791), and which found itself, in Peter Frizsche’s phrase, ‘stranded in the present’. 85

For Schelling, things human and physical must be uncovered and traced back to their source. All phenomena demand an ‘immense investigation’ to unravel all of the multifarious intricacies and folds that went into their growth and development; even a grain of sand possesses a determination within itself that ‘we cannot exhaust until we have laid out the entire course of creative nature leading up to it’ (W, 121–22).

The vastness of the task and the resistances and difficulties involved become part of the process of uncovering. Undaunted, Schelling seeks not only the sources of the beginning of phenomena, but what was before that beginning. ‘The spirit’ – a sort of metaphysical explorer – finds a presupposition of a time before the last visible thing when there was nothing but ‘the one inscrutable, self-sustaining essence, from whose depths all has come forth’ (W, 122). However, it is possible – and here there is a sense of the Gothic sublime – for the spirit to probe even deeper, and venture even further into ‘new abysses’:

> It would not be without a kind of horror that spirit would finally recognize that even in the primordial essence itself something had to be posited as a past before the present time became possible, and that it is precisely this past that is borne by the present creation, and that still remains fundamentally concealed. (W, 122)

Whilst noting that he, Schelling, has personally had insufficient time to pursue the theme of time, past, present, future; and that time is a constant of human experience, it is nevertheless possible, it would seem, to collapse the development of time and history and perceive ‘everything as one in life and deed’:

> We have a presentiment that one organism lies hidden deep in time and encompasses even the smallest of things. We are convinced (but who is not?) that each great event, each deed rich in consequence, is determined to the day, the hour – indeed to the very moment – and that it does not come to light one instant earlier than is willed by the force that stops and regulates time. (W, 123)

Schelling discovers two forces present in time: one of development, the flow of time itself, and one that holds back, retards and indeed inhibits and stops the flow of time. Without the latter, negative force, the universe (so Schelling claims) would be over ‘in a flash’. Negativity is essential striving against the positive force which drives forward, and without contradiction and struggle there would be ‘a deadly slumber’ of forces. We are close to Blake’s Proverb of Hell (‘Damn braces, bless relaxes’), and this energetic, even infernal, opposition can be traced back in both Schelling’s and Blake’s case to the visionary works of Jakob Böhme.
‘Contradiction’, Schelling writes, ‘is in fact the venom of all life and all vital motion is nothing but the attempt to overcome this poisoning’ (W, 124). In the grand economy of dynamic tension, even the negative and seemingly destructive and sinful has a positive role to play. Few people have realised what force lies in limitation, not in expansion.86

Everything in time yearns for the peace of non-contradiction, but opposition can be found even in the Highest, not just in creation, even though we would expect the Highest to be the Unconditioned. Schelling says that, although this state of contradiction is well-nigh universal, and philosophers just have to accept this, he himself struggles to find some sort of difficult ‘peace’ by identifying ‘what is’ (Seyendes) with ‘being’ (das Seyn), linguistically aligning the stative and the dynamic (and thus reflecting the joining of Spinoza’s natura naturata and natura naturans). Yet the problem remains: how can there be duality in unity?; how is the timeless One realised as the temporal many? Here Schelling follows a Neoplatonic model of triads of Hypostases, distinguishing three stages of generation. Each of these stages or Potencies encapsulates the next. As stages of generation, they are far from being merely the emergence of the possible, for they are expressions of the lawful freedom of creation, not the spawning of every possible contingency; they represent an increase. As such, they form part of Schelling’s concern with a radical and underlying freedom, as considered in his earlier treatise On the Nature of Human Freedom (Über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit) (1809), and his concern to reconcile order and the unchecked free energy represented by liberty.

The first potency A1, the affirming principle, must contain B, the negating principle, in order to freely create that which is independent from it. The self-affirming, expanding agency is A2. The unity of A1 and A2 is A3. This triad was later revised a number of times by Schelling, being rendered as a more deferred process of differentiation: A1 is the Unlimited, A2 the Limited, and A3 the Self-limiting, or as a more experimental triad: Possibility, Impossibility, and Transpotentiality (the latter being a higher form in exactly the same manner as, in the treatise on Samothrace, Hermes is above the preceding Cabiri, in that it leads, not only to reconciliation, but to a superior order of things from the lower forces of creation).87

It is difficult to finely equate the Potencies with the Cabiri as, ex hypothesi, all enjoy a defining but undefined nature. However, Schelling finds the same quality of yearning in the first of the Potencies A1 as he identified in the first of the Cabiri, Demeter: there is a longing in Eternity, a yearning which comes about without Eternity either helping or knowing – a longing to come to itself, to become conscious, ‘of which Eternity itself does not become conscious’ (W, 136). Schelling likens this condition to the polar opposites of a magnet, which experience a state of endless longing, and it would be interesting to know if some distant image of the magnetism of Samothrace lay behind Schelling’s analogy. This primordial longing, unlike that of the Goddess, is utterly unaware: ‘This is a seeking that remains silent and completely unconscious, in which the essence remains alone with itself, and is all the more profound, deep, and unconscious, the greater the fullness it contains in itself’ (W, 137).
This ‘resting will’ generates or (it would seem) gives birth to the second Potency, more peaceful perhaps than the first, but equally unconscious, actively self-seeking will. It is unconditioned, omnipotent, and self-producing. This will is independent of Eternity; it longs for Eternity, but cannot become so itself. From it comes ‘the great process of the whole’; probably, Schelling means this in the Neoplatonic sense of process (πρόοδος), in which the One advances through the cosmos back to itself, although (in Schelling) the trajectory is almost at once reversed. There is right from the start a greed in nature and matter for the eternal. This is reflected in the will which springs from a lack (Mangel), a need for essence which it has to posit outside itself. ‘Unconscious longing is its mother’, Schelling writes of the will, ‘but she only conceived it and it has produced itself’, so the will ‘produces itself not out of eternity, but rather in eternity’ (W, 137).

Here, there are two points of tremendous importance. The first is that primacy is given to the feminine, and this is (it seems) not merely metaphoric; Schelling later says that a germinal (potential) life precedes the active, and that the ‘receptive sex’ is present first and on its own, in the ‘supposedly asexual’ lower species of animals (W, 148). The second is that there is an immediate parallel made between the free will of the Origin and an individual person’s will, which unconsciously produces itself in a man’s mind – he simply finds it, and only when it is found does it become ‘a means for him to externalize what lies innermost within him’ (W, 137). Schelling’s notion of a free will is not at all, it would appear, a matter of rational choice, but rather the force of realising one’s innermost nature, one’s potentiality. It is volition, but not in the usual, utterly untrammelled sense of voluntary. Its very obscurity, its unconscious nature, gives it both power and authenticity without external limitation.

Man, nature, matter, all burn for release and the fulfilment of a need for articulation, and to overcome the force of negation which keeps them in their preset condition. Dreams are seen by Schelling as a window into these inner forces, or rather the inner Potency, and the search for the Philosopher’s Stone is analogous to this quest for potency in material form. Schelling speculates whether an inner force in all things desires to be released to change into a higher spiritual essence, to feed on their own spiritual pabulum. In a wonderful passage he argues that ‘things do not seem fully completed by what constitutes their existence in the strictest sense’, for ‘something else in and around them first grants them the full sparkle and shine of life’:

There is always an overflow, as it were, playing and streaming around them, an essence that, though indeed intangible, is not for that matter unremarkable. But this essence that shines through everything – is this not just that inner spiritual matter which still lies concealed in all things of this world, only awaiting its liberation? Among the most corporeal of things, metals in particular have always been regarded as individual sparks of light from this essence, glimmering in the darkness of matter. A universal instinct divined the presence of this essence in gold, which seemed most closely related to the
spiritual-corporeal essence by virtue of its more passive qualities, its almost
infinite ductility, its softness and tenderness, which render it so similar to
flesh and result in the greatest indestructibility.

(W, 151)

It is because of this spiritual essence, its association with Golden Ages, and the
fact that it was a sign of ‘that blessed primordial time’ that the alchemists ‘wanted
– never gold, but rather the gold of gold’ (W, 152). Schelling further speculates
whether it would be possible for humans to get their hands on this inner spiritual
essence; if so, then they would be able to transform baser metals into a more noble
one through a series of steps. By the inner essence he seems to suggest the
Philosophers’ Stone; and, once attained, its inner force would be stronger than the
outer restricting force.

Just as matter might be ‘released’, so in dreams, which have the greatest form
of intensity, we have the release of the boundary of the soul. In a similar way,
alchemy sets free the interior, thus ‘initiating true transformations’ (W, 160–61).
In that inner world of matter and dreams – the gold of mines, the green of plants
– we are close to the archetypes, energies which are different from the tran-
scendent Ideas of Plato. For Schelling, Plato was only a reporter and interpreter of
a doctrine, a sacred legacy, which was by Plato’s time already lost in deepest
antiquity. The archetypes, energies, Urbilder, are essential to matter, to the destiny
of the individual, and to life itself:

The production of such archetypes or visions of future things is a necessary
moment in the overall development of life, and even if these archetypal
images cannot be understood as physical natures in precisely the normal
sense, they certainly cannot be thought apart from all physicality. They are
neither merely universal concepts of the understanding, nor fixed models; for
they are Ideas precisely because they are eternally full of life, in ceaseless
motion and production.

(W, 161)

These archetypes stream out from the innermost part of creative nature and the
individual has access to them through inner vision. Sleep, the mystery of the
depths, the primal springs of the deepest night of antiquity, and the obscure,
unconscious generation of the cosmos present, for Schelling, the same energies
and sources. The primordial at its most obscure, the archaic at its most primeval,
consciousness at its most occluded, matter at its densest, and the deepest, darkest
recesses of Nature: these are the places where the potencies and archetypes may
be encountered (although, like Fafnir, at their most sluggish, albeit most rich).
Schelling conveys all this in an exemplary passage of the primordial sublime,
which contains echoes of Kant’s early essay Observations on the Feeling of the
Beautiful and Sublime (Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und
Erhabenen) (1764):

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Darkness and concealment are the dominant characteristics of the primordial time. All life first becomes and develops in the night; for this reason, the ancients called night the fertile mother of things and indeed, together with chaos, the oldest of beings. The deeper we return into the past, the more we find unmoving rest, indistinction, and indifferent coexistence of the very forces that, though gentle at the beginning, flare up later into ever more turbulent struggle. The mountains of the primordial world seem to look down on the animated life at their feet with eternally mute indifference; and likewise with the oldest formations of the human spirit. We encounter the same character of concealment in the mute solemnity of the Egyptians, as well as the immense monuments of India, monuments that seem built for no time but rather for eternity. Indeed, this character even emerges in the silent grandeur and sublime tranquility of the oldest works of Hellenistic art, works that still bear within themselves the (albeit softened) force of that pure, noble age of the world.

(W, 179–80)

Force and energy are essential, in that they vivify the density of these serene but largely static edifices, and these energies must have, for mortals, a perilous fiercelyness, for they are the very forces of nature, the unextinguishable driving-upward into a higher resolution. Only an exceptional individual can embark on such an exploration, or on ‘the Odyssey of the spirit’, as Schelling liked to call it. Such an individual must overcome the limitations of his being in order to become (in philosophical terms) ‘posited-outside-himself’ (W, 163). He must be in contact with the ‘eternal in his soul’ or enjoy the intercession of a daemon, ‘a genius that nature has given us as a companion, and that alone is capable of serving as an instrument to being, to the extent that the conscious spirit lifts itself above the genius’ (W, 163).

Just as the world in its substance is a coagulation of subterranean energies, Die Weltalter itself is a plutonic geology of cultural forces. Here gleams a vein of Neoplatonism, there the triads of Plotinus and Proclus; there is a glint of Iamblichan theurgy, now we find buried in passages on magnetic vision the Ideas of Plato and the Daemons of the Chaldean Oracles; and, in the depths, we encounter the Mysteries of Samothrace and hear the rumble of Spinoza’s deus sive natura. At the same time, we find energies for future developments, especially dynamic psychology: the unconscious, the archetypes, dreams, inhibitions, the importance of desire and its restriction, the individuation process. It is as if the cultural matrix were becoming ready for the emergence of Freud and Jung.

Ultimately, the exploration of God and the spirit is dangerous and terrible, because of the sheer force of negation which keeps the boundaries of the universe. Only the inner spirit of God, love, can counter such forces:

This force is the white heat of purity, intensified to a fiery glare by the pull of nature. It is unapproachable, unbearable to all created things, an eternal wrath that tolerates nothing, fatally contracting but for the resistance of love.

(W, 171)
The fierceness of this wrath burns up from a deeper, largely unacknowledged layer of Schelling’s cultural matrix: the work of the seventeenth-century German mystic, Jakob Böhme.

**Böhme: The unconscious of the unconscious**

Schelling was quite unforthcoming about his reading and his sources, but the link with the books of the visionary of Görlitz is well attested. He discussed Böhme with Coleridge, he was acquainted with Franz von Baader (who attempted to reconcile Böhme and Catholicism), and there is evidence that Ludwig Tieck introduced the thought of Böhme to the Jena Circle as early as 1799. Like Schelling, Böhme sought to understand not simply the origins of the world, but also the nature of God, and in his works the archaic sublime is truly at its most terrible. These tremendous subjects appear primarily in *Aurora* (1612), *Signatura Rerum* (1622), and *Mysterium Magnum* (1623).

In *Aurora* Böhme gives us an account of his principal vision. He tells us how he was seized with melancholy ‘as with the presence of evil and good in the world’. He overcame his apprehensions and made an assault upon God and upon the Gate of Hell, so that his spirit burst through ‘even into the innermost birth and geniture of the Deity’. This resurrection of his spirit allowed him to see ‘through all, and in all and by all the creatures, even in herbs and grass it knew God’ (the echo of this moment in Schelling’s *Weltalter* is already clear). Böhme continues that, in that light, his will was set on by ‘a mighty impulse, to describe the being of God’.

Böhme’s experience recapitulates God’s own emergence, and the Dawn of the title is both the visionary’s and the Deity’s, so there is a deep parallel between the development of the two. The violence of Böhme’s breakthrough, the rupture of the barrier, anticipates the dangerous energies and the strife of the origin of the world, and again anticipates Schelling’s discussion of boundaries and overcoming the negative force of containment.

In *Aurora*, the qualities of the sublime – obscurity, terror, awe, power, associated with the primordial and the archaic – become active qualities, active and potent agents which produce the world. They are the Qualities of alchemy, partly chemical, partly spiritual, in the crucible from which God, the Cosmos, and the forces which drive it are formed. These forces are not just attributes of God, they reveal the nature of God, and in a deep sense they are God, and are working throughout the world. Böhme describes the Qualities as the seven sources, species, kinds, manners, circumstance, powers, operation, faculties of a thing. The Quality is ‘the mobility, boiling, springing, and driving of a thing’, and the seven Qualities are the seven Spirits of God, each combining two species of good and evil. *Qualität* is identified by Böhme with both *Quelle* (or ‘source’) and *Qual* (or ‘suffering’). These Qualities are in the innermost nature of all things and constitute their ‘deep Mystery’: ‘In the deep the Power of all Stars, together with the Heat and Lustre of the Sun are all but one Thing, a moving, hovering like a Spirit or Matter [eine bewegende Wallung gleich eines Geistes oder einer Materia]’.
Adjectives, verbal nouns (gerunds), and qualifiers (adjectives) are of supreme significance here; nouns tend to be petrified, dead. It is a vision of change, indeed transfiguration, which is reflected later in the style of Schelling’s writing, though it is not just style, it is the force itself. Buffon’s observation, *le style c’est l’homme même*, here takes on a profound significance.

These Qualities are working even in the deepest, most material of locations, ‘as in the corrupted, murderous den or dark valley and dungeon of the earth, there spring up all manner of earthly trees, plants, flowers, and fruits’.96 We can already see the ground for the later Romantic fascination with the mine for, as Böhme tells us, within the Earth grow curious precious stones, silver and gold, and these are a type of ‘Heavenly Generation and Production’.97

In the *Mysterium Magnum: An Exposition of the First Book of Moses* (1623) Böhme returns to the subject of spiritual forces working in and through nature; nature taking on the likeness of the invisible, spiritual world as the soul in the body. ‘God is nigh unto All and through All’.98 From material creation we can find out a way to understanding, and indeed, witnessing, not only the forming of the world, the emergence of the Deity out of Nothing, but what was before the world and God. Just as the unappeasable longing of Demeter/Axieros precedes creation so too longing in Böhme precedes everything: ‘The Nothing hungereth after something, and the hunger is a Desire.’99 This ‘Nothing’ (*das Nichts*) is potentially all, the ‘Desire’ is the Fiat of the creating power which comes into being in order to know itself: ‘For the Desire has nothing that it is able to make or Conceive – it concentratreth it selfe – it impresseth it selfe – it coagulateth it selfe – it draweth it selfe into it selfe and comprehends it selfe’.100 So the Abyss becomes ‘the Byss’ (foundation, bottom), the *Ungrund* becomes the *Grund*. The Abyss becomes ‘the Eye of the Abyss’, and ‘the Eternall Chaos brings it selfe into Nature’; from this forms a series of successive interacting and contending Properties.

The First Property which arises from obscurity is that of Desire which is ‘Astringent, Harsh and Eager’, overshadowing itself it first creates ‘the Darknesse of the Abyss’.101 This property is the ‘Will of the Abyss’ and Böhme identifies it with God the Father.102 The Second Property is ‘the Delight or Impassion of the Will’, it has ‘a magnetical attraction’ and it is a ‘Compunction, a Stirring, a Motion’, and it is the Son.103 Böhme gives it the name ‘Lubet’ which signifies a pleasing or pleasurable delight.104 ‘Lubet’, according to Jung’s philological analysis in *Symbols of Transformation*, is part of the etymological history of the libido: ‘Libido or lubido (with *libet*, formerly *lubet*), “it pleases”; *libens* or *lubens*, “gladly, willingly”; Skr. *lúbhyati*, “to experience violent longing” [etc.]’.105 The Third Property is the Spirit, and whereas the Second Principle, the Son, is ‘a driving together’, the Third is ‘the Severable’, the rising spring of distinctness which moves towards the ‘Outbirth of Creation’.106 It is ‘Anguish’ (*Angst*).107

There is a dark, infernal side to the Properties which is Wrath, burning, fire, corrosiveness, and, although the Holy Ghost reigns in calm and meekness, there is fierceness, also Fury (*Grimmigkeit*).108 The three Properties are identified with the primary alchemic ingredients: Sulphur, Mercury, and Sal, which boil, contend,
and solidify in the self-created alembic of creation. Substance and matter, where they occur, are arrested process, things are and stand in place only as a balance of negative and positive forces, again as in Schelling. Böhme’s sentences or phrases erupt with a mix of hypotaxis and parataxis, like vast jets of fire in the sun’s photosphere. There is no peaceful emanation of the godhead, matter gradually becoming dense and less good with the privation of the spirit, as there is in Neoplatonism:

For the Hardnesse causeth Substance and weight: & the Compunction giveth Spirit and the ‘Active Life’: these both mutually Circulate in themselves and out of themselves, yet cannot go any whither [parted] what the Desire: viz. the Magnet maketh Hard, that the attraction doth again breake in pieces: & it is the Greatest unquietnesse in it selfe; like a Raging madnesse: and in it selfe an horrible Anguish [Angst] [. . .].

This caldera of seething affect is an expression of an active Will, and the all-creating Word is a tremendous Speech Act, a breath before what Böhme calls ‘the Coagulation of the Syllable’:

The Creation of the outward world, is a manifestation of the inward Spirituall Mystery, viz or the centre of the Eternall Nature with the holy Element and was brought forth by the Eternall Speaking Word through the motion of the inward world as a spiration; which Eternall Speaking Word hath expressed the Essence in the Speaking.

Böhme enlarges on these themes in his Signatura Rerum (1622). Once again, there is a violent anticipation of Romantic expressivism, vitalism and magnetism in his description of the cosmic agon: ‘Sicknesse and paine arise when an Essence destroyeth another & there is contrariety and combate in this Being of Beings, how one doth oppose, poysone, and kill another.’

All is driven by a fierce convection that springs from the Ungrund of the original Nothings, and seeks rest and self-knowledge through creation. It is a much rougher ride than the flight of the alone to the alone:

We understand that without Nature there is an Eternall Stillness & Rest, and then we understand that an eternal Will ariseth in the Nothing, to introduce the Nothing into a Something that the Will might find, feel & behold it selfe.

In chapter 3 of Signatura Rerum, Böhme imparts the hidden ‘Arcanum’, ‘the Great Mystery of All Beings’:

We give you to understand This of the Divine Essence; without Nature God is a Mystery understood [a sort of active hypostasis] in the Nothing, which is an Eye of Eternity an Abyssal Eye, that standeth or seeth in the Nothing for it

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is the Abyss, & this same Eye is a Will, understand a longing after manifestation, to find the Nothing; but now there is Nothing before the Will, where it might find Something, where it might find a place to Rest; therefore it entreteth into it selfe, and findeth it self through Nature.\textsuperscript{113}

Nature becomes the foundation (\textit{Grund}), albeit a rather seismic one. But the Nothing, as an undetermined blind force of Will, is perfect freedom. And yet that freedom, that ‘Eye’, demands the mirror of self-revelation. This yearning desire is a universal force and Böhme gives it the name \textit{Abgrund} – the source of life in Anguish (\textit{Angst}).\textsuperscript{114}

Thus Böhme develops a vision of tremendous energies, qualities, and potencies, which emerge from the primordial, and of the blind search which is the emergence of God. The link with Schelling’s development of a notion of a striving unconscious, and the ideas of ‘lack’ and ‘yearning’, are already there. These same drives are to be found within the individual and all phenomena, although in Böhme the sheer affect is at a greater level, and potencies such as the Cabiri take the form of Qualities. If we seek for the ground or origin of the notion of the unconscious, then perhaps it may be found in Böhme’s \textit{Ungrund}, even if this immense proto-concept had not yet been fully developed in cultural terms.

\section*{The will, the sublime, the uncanny and the tremendum}

In Böhme, too, we find the direct ancestor of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), and the idea that behind all creation and destruction of phenomena lies the turbulent Will. For Schopenhauer, Böhme offered a model of the development of creation, and creatures; a development through a universal \textit{principium individuationis}, which was the same for Man, the Cosmos, and God.

Here, as in Schelling, a possibility is opened up to penetrate beyond the horizon of the Kantian categories to the noumenal which underlies both subject and object – the depths of the self and the thing-in-itself (\textit{Ding-an-sich}). Phenomena composed the great book of nature which revealed an under-meaning, the hypno\textit{noia}, of things. Through them, in Böhme, one can trace the lineaments of God and discover what prevailed before God and creation. Schopenhauer sees in Nature the manifold grades and modes in which the Will manifests itself.\textsuperscript{115} Whereas Böhme’s Will, the yearning of origin, works towards self-knowledge, and \textit{Angst}, Wrath, Bitterness, and Evil are the engines which energise the quest for rest, redemption, wisdom and love, Schopenhauer’s Will sweeps all things on to their ultimate destruction – creating and devouring individuals in a swirling vortex of creation and obliteration: \textit{Apparent rari, nantes in gurgite vasto} (‘Singly they appear, swimming by in the vast waste of waves’).\textsuperscript{116}

Schopenhauer’s pessimistic sublime overwhelms the final distinctions of Nature, and ultimately of rational philosophy. But even in Kant’s fine apparatus of the mind we can discern the tremors of a stirring affect. In an early work,
Theorizing the archaic

*Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1764), Kant considers Burke’s essay *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757), along with its raging storms, horror, soaring mountains, and Milton’s portrayal of Hell. Kant carefully categorises the sublime into the terrifying sublime; great depths and chasms, and the noble, great heights and the ‘splendid’, as seen in vast monuments such as the pyramids. In his later third Critique, *the Critique of Judgement* (*Kritik der Urteilskraft*) (1790), the sublime exceeds the boundaries of cognition and so ‘to contravene the ends of our power of judgement’ (§23). The sublime is ‘an outrage of the imagination’, and, although he is discussing aesthetics and not theology, Kant like Böhme makes a link between sublime greatness and suffering; for the pleasure of the sublime is ‘only possible through a medium of pain’ (§27).  

The might of Nature is, for Kant, an example of the ‘dynamical sublime’, being superior to all hindrances. This excites fear, and we can only appreciate sublimity from a safe vantage when we observe

> [bold, overhanging, and as it were threatening rocks; clouds piled up in the sky, moving with lightening flashes and thunder peals; volcanoes in all their violence of destruction; hurricanes with their track of devastation; the boundless ocean in a state of tumult; the lofty waterfall of a mighty river, and such like.](§28)

In the same section, Kant engages in a discussion of the sublimity of war and conflict, as a contrast to peace, which – though it brings peace and a predominant commercial spirit – can also debase mankind, bringing about ‘low selfishness, cowardice and effeminacy’. From this, he immediately turns to the fear of God and the outbursts of his wrath appearing in the tempest, the storm, and the earthquake. These operate on man as a moral lesson, and he is awakened to a stern judgement on his own faults. Kant’s own judgement quickly re-asserts its authority, and he turns to the abstraction of the mathematical sublime and a discussion of the beautiful, which is of such importance in Neoplatonism, but less so in the primordial sublime of Böhme and Schelling. A similar shift occurs, it would seem, in the later Schelling, where there seems to have been a retrenchment, as he sought to contain the energies of the *Frühromantiker* of Jena.

In the early and middle writings on *Naturphilosophie* and *Identitätsphilosophie* there is an underlying conception of the unconscious, an eternal unconscious (*ewig Unbewußtes*) which exceeds the object/subject distinction. In a work of 1809, *On the Nature of Human Freedom* (*Über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit*), Schelling identified the irrational principle (*das irrationale Prinzip*):

> After the eternal act of divine self-revelation, everything in the world as we now see it is according to rule, order, and form. But still there always lies in the ground (*im Grunde*) that which is unruly (*das Regellose*), as if it could someday break through again.  

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Madness is divine and a source of freedom, available for the higher individual to use, although it must be carefully kept in check, as it represents the ‘inner-laceration of Nature’, and so the negative force of constraint must not be entirely abandoned.\(^{119}\)

In his much later work, *Philosophy of Mythology (Philosophie der Mythologie)* (1842), Schelling returns once again to the primordial consciousness (*Urbewußtein*), the *Urreligion* of the most primitive mythologies. But, like Goethe, Schelling now seems to favour an Olympian classical ‘Homeric clarity’ over the archaic mystery religions. Indeed, in his treatment of the two faces of Dionysos, at once savage and benign, he seems to favour a discreet veiling. In a celebrated passage from this work, Schelling anticipates Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy* and Erwin Rohde’s *Psyche*, and he develops the quality of the ‘uncanny’ (*das Unheimliche*). Schelling suggests there are some things which are too unsettling, so freedom comes from these forces being held in check:

Greece had a Homer precisely because it had mysteries, that is because it succeeded in completely subduing that principle of the past, which was still dominant and outwardly manifest in the Oriental systems, and in pushing it back into the interior, that is, into secrecy, into the Mystery (out of which it had, after all, originally emerged). That clear sky which hovers above the Homeric poems, that ether which arches over Homer’s world, could not have spread itself over Greece until the dark and obscure power of that uncanny principle which dominated earlier religions had been reduced to the Mysteries (all things are called uncanny which should have remained a secret, hidden, latent, but which have come to light); the Homeric age could not contemplate fashioning its purely poetic mythology until the genuine religious principle had been secured in the interior, thereby granting the mind complete outward freedom.\(^{120}\)

Freud cited this passage at the start of his essay ‘The Uncanny’ (*Das Unheimliche*) (1919), an analysis of E. T. A. Hoffmann’s short story ‘The Sandman’ (*Der Sandmann*) (1816). In the course of his discussion, Freud associates the perception of anguish and dread with hidden fears of castration and conflict with the father that is kept down or repressed.\(^{121}\)

A more positive although arguably more terrible account of affect, appeared two years before Freud’s essay; namely, Rudolf Otto’s study of *The Idea of the Holy (Das Heilige)* (1917), an exploration of ‘the depths of the divine nature’.\(^{122}\) Otto attempts to analyse how the numinous grips and stirs the human mind. At its most profound, it may be characterised as a *mysterium tremendum*, whose effects may be the deepest worship or intoxicated frenzy, spasms and ecstasy. Otto examines the quality of these feelings: awfulness, fear, majesty, the overpowering power, the shudder, energy and urgency. Much is reminiscent of the terrors of the sublime in Burke and the awakening *Ungrund* in Böhme. In fact, in a discussion of the numinous in Martin Luther, Otto talks about the ‘non-rational energy’ and ‘awefulness of God’ in Böhme – the ferocity, fierce wrath, and the Will which are
all ideograms of the *tremendum*. Thus, once more, we are brought to the immense force of the primordial as a religious experience; the irruption of forces which are at once irrational and transcendent.

**Dark with excessive bright**

In Plato’s dialogue *Parmenides*, the young Socrates is interrogated by Parmenides about his notion of the Ideas. How is it possible, he asks, that an Idea may be present at once in a number of earthly manifestations? Is the Idea most like a sail that could cover the heads of all the crew of a ship at once? This may certainly be asked about the primordial, which is blacker than the sail of Theseus and whose coverage envelops the whole of Creation. It would seem that, in Pope’s words, ‘a universal darkness buries all’, and that the obscurity verges on the meaningless, were it not for the sublimity of the passions it arouses; the potencies which rend its veil, and ultimately illuminate it. Burke illustrated his discourse on the sublime with quotations from Milton and from the Book of Job; Milton, for his visions of chaos and the infernal regions, and Job, for his terrors and sufferings. As, for example, a passage in Job which he describes as ‘amazingly sublime’, principally due to the terrible uncertainty of what is described:

In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, fear came upon me and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face. The hair of my flesh stood up. It stood still, but *I could not discern the form thereof*; an image was before mine eyes; there was silence; and I heard a voice, – Shall mortal man be more just than God? ([Job, 4: 13–17](http://www.routledgementalhealth.com/the-archaic-9780415547567) [Burke, 63; Burke’s italics])

In his *Answer to Job* (1952), Jung grapples with the dangerous, wrathful side of God, the non-rational energy which, at its worst in the Book of Revelation, becomes ‘a veritable orgy of hatred, wrath, vindictiveness, and blind destructive fury’. The wrath of God is tempered and moralised through his relationship to Job, to Man. Indeed, Yahweh, ‘an archaic god’, following the pattern of the development we have seen in Böhme and Schelling, emerges into consciousness and differentiation through Nature and Man. He *needs* conscious Man, though he resents that consciousness; he is no friend to critical thought, but he needs the tribute of recognition, for without Man there would be ‘a withdrawal into hellish loneliness and the torture of non-existence, followed by a gradual reawakening of an unutterable longing for something which would make him conscious of himself’. For Man, this is a perilous business, exposed to omnipotent ‘hatred, wrath, vindictiveness’, and so Man must, in his encounters with archaic unconsciousness, always favour the light: ‘The encounter between conscious and unconscious has to ensure that the light which shines in the darkness is not only comprehended by the darkness, but comprehends it.’ The light, too, can be overpowering:
Burke turns to Milton to describe the terrible beauty, the overwhelming light of God; a ‘light which by its very excess is converted into a species of darkness’, so that: ‘Dark with excessive light thy skirts appear’ (Burke, 80). In the primordial, darkness and light are one and yet to be manifest as separate. Damascius, in De principiis, says that ‘[o]f the first principle the Egyptians said nothing, but celebrated it as a darkness beyond all intellectual conception, a thrice-unknown darkness’. It was observed of this darkness that it was the ‘brilliancy of the primal veil’ which was too strong even for spiritual sight. Another Hellenistic philosopher, Porphyry, in his commentary on book 12 of the Odyssey, entitled ‘Concerning the Cave of the Nymphs’, says that the ancients consecrated the cave as ‘the representative of every invisible power: because as a cave is obscure and dark, so the essence of these powers is unknown’. However, these powers are formative, and so the cave is the way to greater light. At the climax of the Mysteries, after a period of subterranean wanderings, the light emerged from darkness and obscurity. This was, according to Plutarch, an anticipation of the entrance of the the newly dead into the underworld:

Then [at the point of death] it [i.e., the soul] suffers something like what those who participate in the great initiations (τέλεσθαι) suffer. Hence even the word ‘dying’ (τέλευταν) is like the word ‘to be initiated’ (τελειόθαι) [. . .]. First of all there are wanderings and wearisome rushings about and certain journeys fearful and unending (ἀτέλεστοι) through the darkness, and then before the end (τέλος) all the terrors – frights and trembling and sweating and amazement. But then one encounters an extraordinary light, and pure regions and meadows offer welcome, with voices and dances and majesties of sacred sounds and holy sights; in which now the completely initiated one (παντελῆς . . . μεμυηνός) becoming free and set loose enjoys the rite, crowned, and consorts with holy and pure men.

Plutarch’s play on words deriving from telos (‘end’) brings together the ideas of death, mystery, and initiation. If this move is applied to notions of the primordial, then the originating darkness has something deathly about it, but linked with a desire for a self-created initiation; it reminds us of the blind teleology of the Potencies. The experience of the initiate is the same as that of the emerging Godhead, an aspiration towards enlightenment, symbolised by the dazzling light of the torches, and of the redeemed hero of the Golden Ass, initiated in the nocturnal Mysteries of Isis, who sees ‘the sun shining as if were noon’. Indeed, something of this experience is, as we have seen, affirmed in Schelling in his treatise on the deities of Samothrace, when he describes the yearning and lack which characterises the origin of things as primarily a desire for the light:

For it is the teaching of all peoples who counted time by nights that the night is the most primordial of all things in all Nature. [. . .] But what is the essence of night, if not lack, need, and longing? For this night is not darkness, nor the
As in the Mysteries, there is a reversal in the depths of darkness which converts all to brilliant illumination; the unknown turns into knowledge, and obscurity becomes an epiphany.

Thus the primordial sublime is the coming of light out of darkness, not darkness as a diminution of the light. In De visione Dei, Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464) considers Paul’s remark in 1 Corinthians about how we now see ‘through a glass, darkly’, and places obscurity as a necessary stage on the path to light. If obscurity, cloud, and darkness are not experienced, then there can be no transcendence; and, in a passage which must surely give solace to all those who contemplate the original darkness, he offers the reassuring advice that ‘the more densely the darkness is felt, the truer and closer is the approach, by virtue of this darkness, to the invisible light’.  

Figure 2 Robert Fludd, ‘The Creation of Light’, Utriusque cosmi maioris scilicet et minores metaphysica, physica atque technica historia, Oppenheim: Hieronymus Galler for Johann Theodor de Bry, 1617, pt.1, 2.
Notes


9 Scholem, Kabbalah, p. 117.


11 Cain, Act II, scene 2, ll. 80–84 (p. 532).


16 Njegoš ‘wearily’ explained to an English visitor, Sir Gardiner Wilkinson, in 1845 that the heads could not be removed as Turks would think they were weakening and invade. Wilkinson later discovered the similar tower when he visited Herzegovina to see the Vizier of Mostar, decorated this time with Montenegrin heads. Wilkinson’s account was published in Blackwood’s Magazine, vol. 65, no. 401, 18 February 1849, 212–18.

17 Njegoš’ biographer, Milovan Djilas, observes that, in Montenegro, ‘the taking of heads was a proof of heroism and victory’: ‘The severed head was the greatest pride and joy
of the Montenegrin. He regarded the taking of heads as the most exalted act and spiritual solace – having been nurtured in mythical history and the naked struggle for life. He did not feel any hatred for the cut off head, the hatred he was bound to feel for it in its live state, but only esteem and solicitude. He washed it, salted it, combed it. After all, it was a human head and the badge of his own highest merit’ (Djilas, 245). Indeed, it was said in Montenegro that, ‘had Adam cut off the heads of a couple of Angels, God would never have chased him out of Paradise, for he would have seen that he had created a hero not a good-for-nothing’ (Djilas, 247).


34 See Plutarch’s Moralia, Athenaeus’s Deipnosophists, or Macrobius’s Saturnalia.


37 Guillaume Baron de Sainte-Croix, Memoires pour servir à histoire de la religion secrète des anciens people; ou recherches historiques sur les mystères du paganisme (1784); and Jörgen Zoega, Vorlesungen über die Griechische Mythologie (1817). For


43 The secrets of the Mysteries proved irresistible to the German Romantic imagination; see, for example, Novalis’s *The Apprentices of Sais (Die Lehrlinge zu Sais)* (1802).


47 See, too, the later discussion of this derivation in Kerényi, ‘The Mysteries of the Kabeiroi’, in *The Mysteries*, pp. 48–49.

48 A clear link may be made here with the dwarf Tages who emerged from under the plough of an augur and dictated the *libri Tagetici*, the Roman/Etruscan ritual books that dealt with omens, rites, hallows, and appeasing the gods. See J. Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town: The Anthropology of Urban Form in Rome, Italy and the Ancient World*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988, pp. 29–30.


67 The material world is seen as a sort of knot of forces: ‘One thinks of a stream, which itself is pure identity; where it meets some resistance, it forms an eddy, which is not an object at rest, but with each moment it disappears and then re-establishes itself’ (Schelling, *First Sketch of a System of Nature Philosophy* (1799); cited in Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life*, p. 145). One is reminded, too, of the aphorisms of the Romantic physician and physicist Johann Wilhelm Ritter (1776–1810), published as *Posthumous Fragments of a Young Physician (Fragmente aus dem Nachlass eines jungen Physikers*) (1810). ‘Each stone comes into existence anew each moment, continuing to generate itself through all infinity’; ‘All bodies are petrified electricity’; and ‘The light appearing in the process of combustion is, as it were, a hole into another world’ (cited in Eudo C. Mason, ‘The Aphorism’, in S. Prawer (ed.), *The Romantic Period in Germany*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1970, pp. 204–34 [pp. 225–26]).

68 Schelling also uses *Dio*, a title by which Demeter (or *Dea*) is called throughout the rest of the Hymn. This is an important link, in that Demeter may come from Deo-Mater (i.e., god/mother).

70 Pothos (Πόθος) has a broader meaning, as in Aristotle’s ‘Hymn to Virtue (Arete)’ where pothos is the longing of heroes for wisdom and virtue, a longing which brought Achilles and Ajax to the House of Hades. Alexander most certainly knew this poem, written by his tutor, and Arrian in his Life of Alexander frequently uses pothos to characterise the drive which energised the Conqueror’s ambition for great deeds. See V. Ehrenberg, Alexander and the Greeks, Oxford: Blackwell, 1938, as well as J. M. O’Brien, Alexander the Great: The Invisible Enemy, London: Routledge, 1992, p. 50: Pothos ‘displays his longing for things not yet within reach, for the unknown, far distant unattained’.

The three positions are part of a debate in antiquity as to whether the universe was created, a matter of accident, or eternal; see D. Sedley, Creationism and its Critics in Antiquity, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

72 Namely, the Intelligible-Intellectual [Noëtic-noëric], the Intellectual [Noëric], the Supramundane [Supercosmic], the Liberated, and the Mundane [Cosmic]; cf. Proclus, ‘Commentary on the Parmenides of Plato’, tr. T. Taylor, cited in The Thomas Taylor Series, 33 vols, Frome: Prometheus Trust, 1994, vol. 5, Hymns and Initiations, p. 315. Matter is the least spiritual and marks the nadir of the emanation process, following this the movement is a return, a path upwards through the many levels towards the One; katabasis followed by anabasis.

73 Proclus, On the Theology of Plato, iii, 14; cited in Hymns and Initiations [The Thomas Taylor Series, vol. 5], p. 315.

74 W. Leibbrand, ‘Schellings Bedeutung für die moderne Medizin’, Atti del XIV° Congresso Internazionale di Storia della Medicina (Rome: 1954), vol. 2, pp. 891–3, cited in H. F. Ellenberger, The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry, London: Allen Lane, 1970, p. 204. Ellenberger suggests that a characteristic of the Schelling tradition is a search for polarities everywhere, though this would be a vast oversimplification of Schelling’s ideas on the Potencies, and would pass over the importance of triads in his work; Schelling constantly seeks to break down the tyranny of binary opposition. In Jung’s text, Schelling and Böhme appear only in a footnote and as an illustrative figure.

75 Cicero, Tusculan Disputations, book 4, chapter 6, §12; cited in Jung, Symbols of Transformation [Collected Works, vol. 5], para. 185.

76 The transformation of sexual to creative psychic energy is a mirror image of Plotinus’ elegant explanation of why Hermes have phalluses – it is because all generation proceeds from the mind (Third Ennead, sixth tractate, §19).

77 Theurgy (Θεοργία) has a number of interpenetrating meanings, all of which seem relevant. The term was apparently coined by the Younger Julian, one of the two editors of the Chaldean Oracles during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, signifying ‘divine work’, the making of individuals into gods, the elevation of individuals from the realm of creation to the divine by active effort using the powers of images, hymns, meditation, contemplations of the gods and employing the assistance of semi-divine Dæmons who mediated between the earthly and the transcendent (see J. H. Lewy, Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy: Mysticism, Magic, and Platonism in the Later Roman Empire, Cairo: L’Institut Français d’Archéologie, 1956, pp. 461–66). The great surviving work of antiquity on theurgy is that of Iamblichus, entitled On the Mysteries of the Egyptians: The Answer of the Priest Abammon (c. 300 CE).


80 Goethe, Faust II, ll. 8075–77.

81 Novalis, Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia, tr. Wood, p. xvi.


Schelling is clearly referring to Psalm 118: 22, and perhaps to the notion of the Stone of the Philosophers, whose initial ordinariness means that it is *spernitur a stultus*.

There is also a strong link with Jung and the cubical stone at Bollingen, which he inscribed with a quotation from Arnaldus de Villanova, and to the *lapis exilis* (see Jung’s note to ‘Dream 32’ in *Psychology and Alchemy* [Collected Works, vol. 12], para. 246, n. 125 [p. 180]).

See P. Frizsche, *Stranded in the Present: Modern Times and the Melancholy of History*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004, whose epigraph, ‘And only where there are tombs are there resurrections’, is taken from Nietzsche’s *Thus spoke Zarathustra*.

Here, Schelling quotes Luther’s translation of Ecclesiastes, perhaps thinking of the toils involved in his present work: ‘All works that are done under the sun are full of vexation, the sun ariseth, and the sun goeth down, only to rise up and go down again, and all things are full of labour yet do not tire, and all forces ceaselessly labour and struggle against one another’ (W, 124).


Coleridge, who was a notorious connoisseur of cultural influence, said in his *Philosophical Lectures* that it was a puzzle to enter into any account of Schelling, and that he would have to refer his audience to a host of sources, one of which, of course, could be himself, and notoriously vice versa – the ‘borrowings’ of *Biographia Literaria*. See the lengthy discussion of Schelling and Coleridge’s originality in T. McFarland, *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969, pp. 29–35. Paul Tillich argued that the ‘supposed fathers of Schelling’s thought, Spinoza, Plato, Böhme, Hegel, Aristotle, & c’, were certainly influences, but also part of the ‘inner progress’ of Schelling’s development’, which led him into proximity with these philosophers, from whom he adopted ‘homogenous elements’ (Tillich, *Mystik und Schuldbewußtein in Schellings philosophischen Entwicklung* [1912], cited in McFarland, p. 31). Much the same might be said about Jung and Schelling, but this region of thought generates the deepest defence. Jung agues in *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (1933) that ideas are ‘never the personal property of their so-called author’, and he continues: ‘They arise from that realm of procreative psychic life out of which the ephemeral mind of the single human being grows like a plant and blossoms, bears fruit and seed, and withers and dies’ (cited in McFarland, p. 30). Clearly, the *Weltgeist* waives its copyright.


The archaic and the sublimity of origins

95 Böhme, *Aurora*, pp. 79–80 (chapter 3, §74).
97 Böhme, *Aurora*, p. 92 (chapter, §26).
100 Böhme, *Mysterium Magnum*, p. 6 (chapter 3, §5). Böhme seems to envision gravity before gravity, and certainly Newton knew his works. Newton saw gravity as the unifying power of Christ’s body in creation, and through the power of gravity everything, however small, exerts a degree of force on every other particle.
104 Böhme, *Mysterium Magnum*, p. 7 (chapter 3, §11). The idea of the ‘Lubet’ is developed at length in the initial chapters of *Mysterium*.
105 Jung, *Symbols of Transformation* [*Collected Works*, vol. 5], para. 188 (p. 131).
111 Jacob Böhme, *Signatura Rerum or the Signature of all Things, shewing the Sign and Signification of the Severall Forms and Shapes in the Creation* [1622] tr. J. Ellistone, London: Calvert, 1651, p. 5 (chapter 2, §1).
112 Böhme, *Signatura Rerum*, p. 6 (chapter 2, §8).
114 For a fuller discussion, see Brown, *The Later Philosophy of Schelling*, pp. 54–56.
115 See Schopenhauer’s note in *The World as Will and Representation* [1819; 1844], vol. 1, §45: ‘Jacob Böhme in his book *De Signatura Rerum*, chap. I. §§ 15, 16, 17, says: “And there is no thing in nature that does not reveal its inner form outwardly as well; for the internal continually works towards revelation [. . .] Each thing has its mouth for revelation. And this is the language of nature in which each thing speaks out of its own property, and always reveals and manifests itself [. . .] For each thing reveals its mother, who therefore give the essence and the will to the form”’ (Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, tr. E. F. J. Payne, 2 vols, New York: Dover, 1969, p. 220).
116 Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1, §49 (p. 236, fn. 36), alluding to Virgil, *Aeneid*, chapter 1, l. 118.
118 On the Nature of Human Freedom, cited by Beach in *The Potencies of God(s)*, p. 53.
119 See Sonu Shamdasani’s discussion of this tradition of divine madness which leads to Schelling and is evident in the ‘Liber Primus’ of Jung’s *Red Book* (fn. 89, p. 238).


125 It is interesting to note that Milton was deeply affected by Böhme; see M. L. Bailey, Milton and Jakob Böhme: A Study of German Mysticism in Seventeenth-Century England, New York: Oxford University Press, 1914.


128 Jung, Collected Works, vol. 11, para. 575 (p. 373).


130 Burke misquotes Milton’s Paradise Lost, book 3, l. 380: ‘Dark with excessive bright thy skirts appear.’


132 Mead, Orpheus, pp. 93–94.


