

## Mythology and the Birth of Nations

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The investigation into the origins of mythology has now raised the question of the origin of peoples with which the emergence of mythology appears intimately connected. How is it that the human species finds itself divided up into nations or peoples (*Völker*)?<sup>26</sup> Assuming the unity of man's origin, as Schelling does (VI:99),<sup>27</sup> and recognizing that primitive man existed only in families, tribes and clans, the question of the origin of peoples becomes a puzzle.

They could not have arisen as a spontaneous outcome of the proliferation and physical dispersion of the human race, for purely spatial separation and merely external causes (natural catastrophes, forced migrations and the like) would have produced only branches (*Stämme*) or "parts of similar kind" and never those dissimilar, heterogeneous groups we know as the nations of the earth. The Arabs, for example, remain non-peoples and basically homogeneous though separated into Eastern and Western groups (VI:96ff cf. 131). Furthermore, the formation of peoples is neither determined nor prevented by emergent physical, racial or even class distinctions. The Hindus, for example, are "a people among whom a physical difference, which comes close to being a racial difference, produced only a division into castes and did not destroy the unity of the nation" (VI:101).

## A. The Crisis or Transition

We are forced, Schelling believes, to conceive an *inward* not an external cause. The separation of the peoples must have been due to a profound spiritual (*geistige*) crisis, arising within human consciousness while mankind still existed in its original homogeneous, undivided state. Schelling's argument here is characteristically based on logic and appeal to psychological and social analogy:

Everyday experience reminds us that in some cases a spiritual apathy will keep back certain physical developments, whereas a great spiritual movement elicits certain physical developments or deviations. We know too that the number and complexity of disorders increased along with the multiplicity of man's spiritual developments, and that just as a sickness overcome in the life of an individual often marks the beginning of a profound spiritual transformation, so new and violent disorders appear as parallel symptoms of great spiritual emancipations.

Now if the division of mankind into peoples was not effected merely by spatial distance of external barriers or even by purely natural differences, but if such compact and mutually exclusive masses of men were created by inward and spiritual factors, it follows that the original unity of undivided mankind, to which we must ascribe a certain duration, could not possibly have persisted unless a spiritual power had maintained that original state of immobility and prevented the seeds of divergent physical developments present within primitive humanity from developing and exercising their influence. It also follows that mankind could not have left that state, in which there was no differentiation into nations but merely division into tribes or families (*wo keine Völker-, sondern blosse Stammesunterschiede waren*), unless a *spiritual* (*geistige*) crisis of the most profound significance had unfolded in the human consciousness and been sufficiently powerful to compel humanity, hitherto undivided, to disintegrate into peoples (VI:102).

Two forces, or principles, or spiritual powers, or Gods are thus distinguished by Schelling. The first preserved mankind in a state of "perfect and absolute uniformity," although there were divisions based on purely external distinctions. Of this power, Schelling says:

It must have been a *God, One* who completely filled the consciousness which was common to all mankind and who drew mankind into his own unity, so to speak, forbidding to man any movement or deviation, whether to the right or to the left, as the Old Testament frequently states. Only a God of this kind could have conferred a duration on that absolute immobility, that period when all development was at a standstill ... The duration we assign to this period of homogeneous humanity is of no importance for it was a period in which nothing happened. Its significance is merely that of a starting point, a *terminus a quo* from which to begin our reckoning (VI:106, 105f).<sup>28</sup>

The second power or God produced the inner spiritual "crisis" already mentioned. The appearance of this other God or Gods - i.e., the emergence of polytheism - resulted in "a shaking of consciousness," an alteration of "the very foundation and principle of consciousness," and was followed "*necessarily and irresistibly*" by a break-up of the primeval unity of the human race and the division into peoples.

It was polytheism which was cast into the midst of homogeneous humanity as the instrument of separation. Various theodicies, which deviated from one another and even, in the course of time, excluded one another, became the infallible instrument for the separation of mankind into peoples (VI:106 cf. 130).

But these two powers or Gods are one. Schelling can say it was a matter of the originally immobile God becoming mobile. Thus,

When the same God who, in imperturbable identity, had maintained the unity of mankind, became himself variable and inwardly dissimilar, he must have brought about the dispersion of the human race, just as he previously held it together. *In his sameness, he was the cause of its unity; in his multiplicity, he became the cause of its dispersion* (VI:107).

In this state of crisis or becoming or transition, when peoples were in process of formation due to an emerging polytheism, language, too existed in a fluid state. Language is "*essentially a spiritual factor,*" separating peoples more profoundly and inwardly than anything external. Hence, "*differentiation into peoples is inconceivable unless*

accompanied by a development of corresponding languages;" and just as mankind was one before the birth of peoples, so language must have been one (VI:102f). There are, in fact, three processes which Schelling arranges in the order of their natural succession: the first and most inward was an alteration of consciousness; the second, more external, was the involuntary confusion of language; the third and most external was the division into peoples. And for this arrangement he finds support in the "Mosaic writings" (VI:103-105). The Genesis myth of the Tower of Babel presents the formation of peoples as caused by the confusion of tongues (i.e., it explicitly cites the intermediate or immediate cause). For the myth-teller, the birth of nations was a sudden evil or misfortune or punishment; it was a *caused* event, not a natural process; it was a *judgment* and therefore a real *crisis* (VI:104).

Schelling has thus described a relationship between a crisis of the religious consciousness, the manifestations of the faculty of language and the formation of earth's peoples. Babylon and the Tower,<sup>29</sup> for example, symbolize the mutual unintelligibility of languages (and unintelligible speech in general) caused by emerging mythology. But Jerusalem and Pentecost were later to witness "the momentary reestablishment of unity of speech (*ὁμογλωσσία*)" as a result of revelation. Pentecost is "Babel reversed," says Schelling. It is the moment when Christianity begins its great career to "restore the unity of the whole human race through the recognition of the one true God." The *separation into peoples* is paralleled by the *migration of peoples* into Christianity, a migration which is more like an assembling or a reunion, than a dispersion (VI:111).<sup>30</sup> Thus, the Tower of Babel and Pentecost represent mighty turning points in the history of religion.

The original unity of language along with the primitive unity of mankind persist after the crisis. "The language of a people stabilizes itself only with the stabilization of the people itself" but retains a connection with "the primitive unity of language which still seeks to affirm itself even after the separation" (VI:112f). Although languages later came to be organized according to completely different principles, we find certain material agreements among them which must be traced back, Schelling believes, to that formative, confused period.

In each emerging language, the original unity continues to be effective, as is shown, partly, by the affinity between the languages. The

disappearance of every element of unity would mean the disappearance of language itself, hence the disappearance of everything distinctively human; for man is man only to the extent that he is capable of a universal consciousness which transcends his individual consciousness; and language has significance only by virtue of its comprehending an element of universality. Some peoples have achieved a very high degree of humanity and of spiritual cohesion, and their languages, though few in number, are spread over vast distances. In such cases, therefore, a community of consciousness is preserved (VI:116).

Anxiety to preserve the consciousness of that original unity of mankind characterized the separating peoples during and after the "crisis". "They felt the destruction of the original unity had given rise to a bewildering multiplicity which could only end in the total loss of all consciousness of unity and therefore of everything distinctively human." There was a feeling of inner restlessness, of no longer being humanity entire, but only a part of it, "of belonging no longer to the unique One but of being devoted to a particular god or gods." This anxiety impelled the peoples to develop the first religious and even civil institutions (VI:113f).<sup>31</sup>

Had nothing been saved of the original unity, Schelling thinks mankind today would be like the primitive South American populations, "human merely in appearance" as described by Azara. Physically homogeneous, these latter have never risen to the status of nationhood (*Völkerthum*) but have persisted without any moral or spiritual unity among them. In the prehistoric state of which these nations were a part before the birth of peoples, there was "tribal existence" and therefore marriage and family life, contracts, personal property and the like. But there was no developed community life characterised by laws, religion, "tradition" (i.e., culture). The very crisis which brought the nations into being was the crisis to which these South American populations succumbed. Nor have they saved anything of the original unity of language, for Azara reported that their "languages" change from band to band, even from hut to hut, and that the very faculty of language seems to be disappearing among them. In this "confusion of idioms", "language is at that final point beyond which it would cease to be language" (VI:114-117).

Just as the Tower of Babel, designed to prevent total dispersion, was in fact the beginning of and pretext for the separation into

peoples,<sup>32</sup> so when mankind first established fixed dwelling places, division began. The stage represented in Homer by the Cyclops, though it was swallowed up in Greece by the ever more powerful movement toward separation, is still preserved in the New World (VI:119f).

## B. Mythology as "Successive Polytheism"

In his search for the true explanation of mythology, Schelling has now discovered not only that polytheism caused the separation of mankind into peoples, but that polytheism was itself preceded by "the consciousness of one general God common to the whole of mankind." He refers to this original religion as "monotheistic" but must specify the sense. Was that general God One in the sense of a revealed monotheism? Was he a mythological God or was He completely amythological? The answer requires a clearer understanding of *the nature of polytheism* which is a key issue in the religious explanation of mythology.<sup>33</sup>

Schelling distinguishes two kinds of polytheism, "simultaneous" and "successive". Simultaneous polytheism arises, he says, when a number of gods co-exist. But since many gods cannot co-exist without becoming subordinate to *one* of their number, this kind of polytheism merges again into a kind of monotheism. Hence it is not true polytheism. It represents the manifoldness of a single God (*Göttervielheit*) rather than a true plurality of gods (*Vielgötterei*).

True polytheism is "successive" polytheism which "accepts the existence of several gods but holds that each is master and sovereign during a certain period so that the gods can rule only successively or in turn" (VI:122), as did Ouranos, Chronos and Zeus in the three successive god-systems of Greece. These gods were not contemporaries but succeeded one another in time, mutually excluding one another. This is *Vielgötterei*, a true plurality. It goes beyond and includes all simultaneous polytheism and yet remains absolute and free. *Vielgötterei* is the enigma. How is it to be understood (VI:124)?

The simple disintegration of a Unity, as proposed by Creuzer, could have produced, at best, "only a *simultaneous* polytheism, a mere stationary juxtaposition, an unexciting uniformity, and never that living mythology, so richly articulated, so full of movement, so polyphonic, as the phenomenon we know as successive polytheism"

(VI:125). A comparison of the various mythologies, however, makes it clear that "what mythology preserves in the succession of its gods is the actual history of the emergence of these gods." Now the investigation rests on *historical* ground.

Mythology is precisely the totality of those theodicies which actually succeeded one another, and is therefore the product of that succession ... Mythology is not composed of theodicies which are merely *represented* as successive. A struggle between successive gods, such as we find described in the Theogony, would never have been found among the mythological representations unless it had *actually* occurred in the consciousness of the peoples who preserve the knowledge of it, and to that extent in the consciousness of mankind of which every people is a part. Successive polytheism can be explained only if we assume that the consciousness of humanity has *actually lingered* over each successive stage and been really affected by every moment one after the other. The gods which succeed one another have really in turn taken possession of consciousness. Mythology as history of the gods, i.e., mythology in the proper sense of the word, could have arisen only out of life itself; it *must* have been something *known* and *experienced* (VI:127).

We should note that when Schelling says mythology has "no reality outside of consciousness," he means simply that the movement and development of successive polytheism takes place in the human consciousness and not that the gods have no existence outside the mind of man. He will later insist that his recognition of the human consciousness as "the true seat, the real generative principle of mythological ideas" is "an attempt to win *objectivity* for the mythological representations"(VI:201, 204) and he will proceed to demonstrate that successive polytheism must correspond to an objective process.

### C. The "Relative Monotheism" of Pre-history

In the light of this understanding of mythology as successive polytheism, we may look again at that *Urgott* who was common to all mankind.

Let us think, suggests Schelling, of the first God 'A'<sup>34</sup> who appeared in consciousness. At that time humanity is unaware that A

will soon be followed by B, and B by C, etc. Hence in this initial stage A appears as the simple unconditioned One, before, alongside and after whom, there is no other. Polytheism (*Vielgötterei*) does not yet exist, so what we have is truly monotheism, if this is understood simply as the opposite of *Vielgötterei*. But it is clear that though this monotheism was *absolute* for the humanity over which it ruled, it is *in itself* and *for us* only relative. The God A is completely unmythological so long as nothing is known of any second God. A mythological god is one who is a member of a historical succession (as we have just seen), and "in any sequence (A, B, C, etc.) A becomes a *member* only when it has been actually followed by B." "The God A is not yet a member of such a series, but he is not therefore unmythological by nature even though he can appear to be such so long as the other God who will strip him of his absolute character has not made his appearance" (VI:129).

This "relative monotheism" followed by "successive polytheism" now appears to Schelling to be the only possible explanation of the original coherence and the subsequent separation of mankind:

If successive polytheism was a real event in the life of mankind, i.e., if humanity actually passed through such a succession of gods as we suppose - and we here remember that this is a fact as indisputable as any attested by history - there must have been, at some time or other in the history of mankind, such a first God as our God A who was only the first element of a future succession although he actually appeared at the time as the unconditioned-One and therefore spread over the world the peace and calm of his undivided and unopposed rule. From the moment the other God announced his presence, however, this peace could not endure, for, as we have shown, confusion and separation were inevitably involved in the appearance of this second God. If, then, we wish to specify the time when there was still room for a first God, it is clear that we cannot assign him to the period when the separation had been accomplished, and that we cannot find him a place in the transitional period either, not even at the *beginning* of the separation. He is to be sought only in the prehistoric period.

Thus, one of two things must hold good: either a first God such as our God A never existed at all, which amounts to denying that there was ever a real succession like that which we feel compelled to recognize



in polytheism proper, or else this God really did rule the consciousness of primitive mankind before the separation began.

Also involved here is the contrary conclusion, that the one God, who reigned during the calm, pre-historic period, was indeed the only one who existed up till then, not in the sense that he *could* not be followed by a second, but only because another God had not yet *actually* succeeded him. *Essentially (potentia)*, therefore, he was already a mythological God, but he would be *actually (actu)* a mythological God only when the second God really appeared and made himself master of human consciousness (VI:138f).

Once the second principle began to influence mankind, i.e., once the *first form* of God was posited, "the subsequent forms were posited at the same time, albeit as more or less remote possibilities" (VI:132). To the various forms of God correspond the materially differing theodicies, and to the various theodicies correspond the different peoples, so that all these "exist in the potential state from the moment of the appearance of the second cause." These divine forms, theodicies and peoples do not all emerge into real life at the same time. Thanks to the successive character of polytheism, they appear in history successively, when their particular moment has come, i.e., "when permitted to do so by the God who in unceasing struggle still keeps mankind in his power." Peoples destined to appear late on the scene pass through all the moments but as part of homogeneous humanity, not as actual peoples, for "only in this way is it possible for the moments, distributed among various peoples, to be united in the consciousness of the last" (VI:133).

In the light of these insights, Schelling feels, the parallelism between linguistic and religious evolution becomes more intelligible (VI:134-138). Language must have been preserved in that prehistoric period in an original stage of *substantiality* (i.e., "nothing but roots") until a second principle appeared and began to produce *formal* as well as *material* differences within it.

Mankind advanced from relative monotheism or Unitheism (*Eingötterei*) through Ditheism (*Zweigötterei*) to Polytheism (*Vielgötterei*). But the same advance characterised the principles of languages which proceed from original monosyllabism through disyllabism to completely unfettered polysyllabism (VI:135).<sup>35</sup>

A new critique of earlier theories now becomes possible. Clearly, there is no need to posit an original absolute monotheism in which God is unconditionally One, excluding the possibility of any other gods. The theory of such a spiritual (doctrinal) monotheism prior to polytheism is religiously, philosophically and historically unjustifiable. In the first place, "the primitive unity of the human race was held together far more decisively by a blind power, independent of human thought and human volition" than by a pure doctrine. Secondly, "the higher the pre-mythological consciousness is placed, the less intelligible becomes the purpose of its degradation, for this transformation could lead only to a more wretched state", as Creuzer, advocate of this view, concedes. Thirdly, the theory cites only negative causes for the rise of mythology. "An *obscuring*, a *gradual obliteration* of an original knowledge" might explain how an original doctrine is misunderstood or forgotten, but only a positive cause, truly destructive of the original unity, could account for the terror which seized mankind at the first approach of polytheism (VI:139-141). As interpreted by Schelling, polytheism is a divinely-ordained judgment, "decreed against mankind in order to destroy not the truly-One but the relatively-One", the *Urgott* of relative monotheism. Hence it represents an *advance*, a mediation of a higher knowledge, a transition toward a greater enfranchisement of the human spirit.

In spite of appearances to the contrary, and however little it be *conceivable* from the present point of view, polytheism was truly a transition toward something better, toward the liberation of mankind from a power (*Gewalt*) beneficent in itself, but oppressive of human liberty, a power which suppressed all development, including attainment of the highest knowledge (VI:141).

It is also now obvious that the concept of revelation cannot be extended to the original relation between man and God. Those who claim the priority of revelation should try to trace it back not simply to the first man but to the first condition of man, i.e., his condition before the Fall. In that initial condition, man either did or did not have a consciousness of God. If he could acquire it only through revelation, then orthodox theologians must affirm "an original atheism of the human consciousness", a conclusion which contradicts their view that man, at the very beginning was the recipient of an original revelation

of God. The only alternative is for orthodoxy to admit that in the beginning man had an *essential* relationship to God; that he was later placed outside that original state (= hunted out of Paradise through his own fault); that this ejection means that God and man had become different, that "there was an alteration in the religious consciousness," and that man was now related no longer to the total divinity but merely to one part ("Look, man is become as *one* of us Elohim"); and that this state corresponds to what Schelling has called "relative monotheism" (VI:143-145, cf. 178-191f).

#### D. Confirmation from the Hebrew Scriptures

The last paragraph is a foretaste of what we find in Lecture seven (VI:146-176). Here Schelling's unusual exegesis of the Old Testament produces confirmation of his general view. We should notice first, however, that Schelling is very explicit about the mythical character of the early stories in Genesis, the legendary aspects of the tales of the Patriarchs, and the varying degrees of inspiration in the Hebrew Scriptures. He writes:

In spite of the homogeneity of the whole, there is no mistaking the fact that in the various parts and passages of the Old Testament, there are quite different degrees of inspiration.

The attempt to treat all the stories, especially of Genesis, as myth, was condemned as sacrilegious. Nevertheless, they obviously are mythical, not, to be sure, in the commonly accepted sense of the word, (i.e., fables), but in the sense that they deal with facts which are real but mythological, that is to say facts which *are such* under mythological conditions (VI:144, 173 cf. 159).

Now, for Schelling, the Hebrew Scriptures distinguish an initial relative monotheism and a late absolute monotheism. In a systematic way, they use "Elohim", the original Semitic name for the primitive God, to designate the first, relatively-One God, the immediate content of consciousness, and the name "Jehovah" to designate the second God, the true God as such, the revealed God of absolute monotheism (VI:147, 165).<sup>36</sup> Similarly, they distinguish a first generation or "age" of men (*Menschengeschlecht*) indicated by the names Adam and Seth, and a second indicated by Enosh. It is said of Seth, but not of his son Enosh, that he was begotten in the likeness of Adam. Like "Adam",

"Enosh" means "man", but "enfeebled" man. And the reason for this "weakness" is that the second God (B), i.e., polytheism, begins to appear in the time of Enosh-man.

Before Enosh there was no monotheism in the sense of knowledge of the true God ... The true God was known as such only by a second generation which differed from the first in being already affected, seized by and subject to a power (*Potenz*) foreign to the first. This strange power can be only our second God (B), the one we have come to know as the first effective cause of polytheism. Hence true monotheism does not arise without the danger of polytheism being present and the God who is relatively One is the pre-condition from which monotheism as well as polytheism arise (VI:148, 150f cf. Gen 4:25).

And again,

The first generation worshiped the true God implicitly (*implicite*), that is, in the relative-One, but without distinguishing him as such. But revelation is precisely manifestation of the true God as such, for whom there was no receptiveness within the first age of man (*Menschengeschlecht*) for the simple reason that there was no felt need to make the distinction in question. It was said of the second generation that it called upon the true God by name; in other words, it was the first to distinguish him as such, and in doing so, it created the possibility of a revelation, but not before the first appearance of polytheism. The most commanding figure is Noah, with whom the true God communicates directly; but it is precisely in the time of Noah that polytheism can be held back no longer, and the Deluge signifies only the transition from the age when polytheism (*Vielgötterei*) could still be contained to that period when polytheism broke forth irresistibly and poured out upon mankind (VI:162).

The Flood thus marks the irresistible emergence of polytheism. It is said to have occurred because "man's wickedness was great in the earth", which Schelling regards as a reference to the ever stronger tendency toward polytheism (VI:152, Gen 6:5 cf. Deut 31:19-21, 1 Chron 29:9). Noah was saved because he did not incline toward the second God; he resisted polytheism; he was a man *who changes not* (VI:154)<sup>37</sup> and found grace in the eyes of the true god. Men were not

exterminated because God perceives that the human race, if it is to exist at all, *cannot be prevented* (Gen 8:21 cf. 6:5) from making the transition to polytheism. Before the Flood, i.e., before polytheism, men lived nomadic lives. After the Flood they became agriculturalists, settled in cities, differentiated into peoples and fell into polytheism. Thus,

The Noachic Deluge - even if it is regarded as, after all, a physical event - was simply the natural sign of the great turning point of mythology and one which was followed inexorably by the confusion of languages, the transition to polytheism with its different theodicies and the division of mankind into peoples and states. The embryonic beginnings of these events must have existed before the time of the Flood, since it is true that in the first centuries after the Deluge Anterior-Asia possessed a heavy population of men who were no longer merely nomads but were associated in states. Babylon had a Kingdom even in Abraham's time, the Phoenicians were engaged in commerce on the Mediterranean coasts, Egypt was a monarchic state with the attendant institutions, and every one of these peoples had elaborated a more or less developed mythology (VI:155).

### **E. Abraham's Monotheism and the Religion of the Future**

The preceding views raise the question: "Where is monotheism to be found?" And Schelling believes the Biblical answer is: among the descendants of Abraham. True religion and revelation were preserved not in mankind as such, nor in some particular people, but among a non-people, the Abrahamites, who for a long time escaped the evolutionary process which swept mankind toward nationhood (VI:158-162). These Abrahamites, descended from Noah through Seth, represent "pure humanity" as opposed to "peoples" and their devotion to the One universal God is intimately connected with the nomadic life." It is precisely the fact that they are not particularized which becomes their particularity" (VI:157f). They regarded polytheism as inseparably associated with nationhood, and continued to do so even after they themselves became a nation. Even the New Testament refers to the pagans as peoples (*εθνη*). But the name "Hebrews" signifies a "non-people." During Abraham's struggles against the kings of the nations, he was for the first time, and in

contrast to the kings, called Haibri (the Ibri), i.e., "one who travels through", a nomad (VI:159; see Gen 17:8, 12:6, 37:28, 2 Kgs 4:8f). And in Canaan he was called a stranger, a wanderer, hence, a non-people.<sup>38</sup>

Abraham's absolute monotheism was continuous with the relative monotheism of primitive times. "Jehovah is simply the *Urgott* in his true and permanent essence" (VI:170). Genesis consistently speaks of Jehovah (never Elohim) as having *appeared* to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (VI:163; see Gen 12:7, 17:1, 18:1, 26:2, 28:12), and these Patriarchs, in important moments, *call Jehovah by name* (see Gen 12:8, 13:4, 21:33, 26:25). Hence, since Jehovah is simply *invoked* and since He merely *appears*, the *direct* content of their consciousness must be Elohim.

Elohim is the natural or ever-present God. He appears in dreams to Abimelech, king of Gerar, and to Laban the Syrian, and the peoples (the heathen) in general still fear him (Gen 20:6, 31:24, 20:11). He ordains the ancient rite of circumcision, and commands Abraham to sacrifice his son (a heathen burnt offering), but it is Jehovah who appears and prevents the sacrifice. In the story of original sin, the two names are found together, but only when the story-teller, not when the wife or the serpent, are speaking. If Adam had spoken, he would have used Elohim, for he knew nothing of Jehovah (VI:165f). The very name, Elohim, while plural in form, has both singular and plural usages. Its singular meaning - its use as a plural of greatness not of manyness - is applicable beyond all question to the primal *Allgott*. But so is its plural meaning in such cases as "let *us* make man in *our* image" and "let *us* go down and let *us* throw their speech into disorder", for in the first case the God who is simply *One* is *without* form, and in the second case, "God must pluralize himself in order to divide up mankind." Hence, *as Jehovah*, God is always one, but *as Elohim*, he is the one who is "exposed to entreaties to pluralize himself" (VI:164).

The same power (*Potenz*) which caused a part of mankind to turn to polytheism, raised one elect generation toward true religion. When the true God, who in the earliest time was unconsciously worshiped in the relative-One, appeared to Abraham, i.e., when He became known and discernible to Abraham, the latter turned toward him consciously and voluntarily ... and detained Him ... and God draws Abraham to Himself and enters into a special relationship with him through which Abraham is entirely separated from the peoples. Since there is no knowledge of the true God unless He is differentiated as such, it

follows that His name is very important. The worshippers of the true God are those who know His *name*; the heathen do *not* know His name. To be sure, the heathen are not unaware of God in a general way (i.e., they are not ignorant as to His substance), but they are unaware of His name, which means they have no way of singling Him out.

But even after having seen the true God ... the immediate content of Abraham's consciousness remains the God of the primitive period who did not *become* for him and hence is not revealed to him, but is ... his *natural* God. For the true God to appear to Abraham, the first God must provide the ground and basis for His appearance, and only on this basis will the new revelation assume the character of permanence ... The true God is mediated to him through the natural God not merely temporarily but constantly. Thus, for Abraham, the true God is never *the One who is* but always *the One who becomes*. This alone is sufficient to explain the name Jehovah which expresses perfectly the notion of becoming. The religion of Abraham does not, therefore, consist in the abandonment of that God of ancient times. It is not Abraham, but the heathen who are unfaithful in this respect (VI:166f).

It is clear, then, that Abraham's monotheism is not absolutely amythological, for it had as its antecedent and pre-condition the relatively-One who was also the precondition, the first power (*Potenz*), of polytheism. The manner of the true God's appearance is mythological in the sense that "that which is polytheistic always intervenes" (VI:173; cf. Gen 22:1 with 22:12 and 22:15f). That the true God is inseparable from the primitive God is indicated by Jehovah's attributes. He is firstly, *El Olam*, "the first, immemorial God without predecessor", the "eternal" (but not in a metaphysical sense), the one who existed "not *since* but *in* that time in which peoples did not yet exist", in contrast with the *Elohim chadaschim*, the new gods of recent birth (VI:167f; Deut 32:17 cf. the phrase *me Olam* in Jer 5:15 and Josh 24:2). Secondly, Jehovah is, for Abraham, the true God of Heaven (Sky) and Earth (Cf. Gen 24:3), for it is as such that the God who was common to the whole human race was once worshiped (VI:169f).<sup>39</sup> Thirdly, Jehovah is *El Shaddai* (VI:170-172), "strong of the strong", "the God whose strength and power is over all" - and he appeared to the patriarchs as, in and through this intermediary. Jehovah says to Abraham: "I am El Shaddai" (Gen 17:1). But Elohim says to Moses: "I

am Jehovah ... I appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in El Shaddai, and *by my name Jehovah I was not known to them.*" Hence, for Schelling, the name Jehovah was first taught by Moses to whom, on other grounds, he ascribes a knowledge of Jehovah independently of El Shaddai.

This pure monotheism, then, was not Abraham's actual religion (which still depended on polytheism) but *the religion of the future*. The true God, for Abraham, was the One who *now appears* but who *one day will be*, and such is his name (VI:173).<sup>40</sup> Later, to Moses, God says that His name is: "I will be who I will be" (VI:173).<sup>41</sup> Perhaps the first meaning of Jehovah was "the One who Becomes," but after this declaration made to Moses it becomes the name of the Future One, "the One who now is merely Becoming but who, one day, Will Be." Hence, both Abraham and Moses receive *promises* from Jehovah (VI:174).<sup>42</sup>

To Abraham, who is not yet a people, the promise is given that he will become a great and powerful people; indeed, all peoples of the earth shall be blest in him, for in him lies the future of that monotheism through which all the peoples, who are now divided and dispersed, will one day be united again (VI:174; see Gen 18:18f, 26:4 cf. Gen 15:6).

Abraham is therefore a *prophet* of the future religion. And similarly the religious law of Moses is full of the future, for "it is nothing but relative monotheism affirming itself against encompassing paganism." Moses saw the Lord "as He is" (VI:175; see Num 12:8 cf. Ex 33:11, Deut 34:10), but the people were brought under the yoke of the Law, the function of which was to preserve the *basis* or ground of the future religion (VI:176).<sup>43</sup>

Meanwhile, the true principle of this *religion of the future* was transferred to *prophetism*, "that other aspect of the Hebraic religious consciousness, supplementary but no less peculiar and essential" (VI:176). The prophets believe this future liberating religion, their chief hope and expectation, will be the religion not merely of Israel but of *all* peoples.

They extend the feeling of negation, from which they themselves suffer, to the whole of humanity and begin to glimpse the future even in and through paganism ... Those who worship the true God, that is, God *in his truth*, can worship him, as Christ says, only *in spirit* (*im*



*Geist*). This presupposes a relationship based on freedom, whereas the relation to God outside his truth like that which exists in polytheism and mythology can only be a non-free relation (VI:176, 178).

Hence, in the Old Testament, as among all peoples, there is a waiting for deliverance, and this comes in Christ:

They await freedom from the law and from the necessity to which not only the Israelites but the whole human race were subjected. On the day of deliverance, the true God will cease to be merely the one who appears, the one who reveals himself ... revelation will come to an end. And this actually happened in Christ, for Christ is the *End (Ende)* of revelation (VI:180).

