

The philosophy of redemption*

Philipp Mainländer†

TRANSLATED BY *Christian Romuss*‡

Whoever investigates the course of the human mind's development, from the beginning of civilisation up to our own day, shall make a curious discovery. He shall find, namely, that reason at first grasped nature's undeniable power always in a fragmented manner and personified the discrete expressions of force, that is, formed gods; then melded these gods into a single God; then, by means of the most abstract thought, made this God into a being that could no longer be imagined in any way; finally, however, became critical, tore up its own subtle fabrication, and set the real individual—the fact of inner and outer experience—on the throne.

The stations of this path are:

- 1) polytheism;
- 2) monotheism – pantheism:
 - a. religious pantheism,

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† Philipp Mainländer (1841-1876), born Philipp Batz, was a German philosopher and poet. He trained as a merchant and was largely self-taught in literature and philosophy. He lived in Offenbach am Main, Naples, and Berlin.

‡ Christian Romuss is Deputy Editor of *Synkrêtic*. He holds a PhD in the History of Ideas from the University of Queensland. He translates German and Spanish philosophy. He is based in Brisbane, Australia.

- b. philosophical pantheism;
- 3) atheism.

Not all civilisations have walked the entire path. The mental life of most has halted at the first or second point of development, and only in two countries has the final station been reached: in India and in Judea.

The religion of the Indians was initially polytheism, then pantheism. (Later, very refined and eminent minds took possession of religious pantheism and developed it into philosophical pantheism—Vedanta philosophy.) At this juncture, Buddha, the glorious prince, appeared, and in his sublime doctrine of karma he founded atheism on *faith* in the *omnipotence* of the individual.

Likewise, the religion of the Jews was at first crude polytheism, then strict monotheism. In monotheism as in pantheism, the individual lost his final trace of autonomy. As Schopenhauer very aptly remarks: Having sufficiently tormented his utterly powerless creature, Jehovah then threw it on the dung heap. Against this, critical reason reacted with unbridled force in the exalted personality of Christ. Christ restored the individual once more to his inalienable right, and on that right, and on *faith* in the motion of the world out of life into death (downfall of the world), he founded the atheistic religion of redemption. That pure Christianity in its deepest foundation is genuine atheism (*i.e.*, *denial* of a *personal* God *coexisting* with the world, but *affirmation* of an immense, all-pervading breath sighed out by a godhead *which perished before it*) and only on its surface is monotheism, I shall prove in this work.

Exoteric Christianity became a world religion and, following its triumph, not a single civilisation more reached the endpoint of the developmental course described above.

In contrast, in the community of Western nations, Western philosophy advanced alongside the Christian religion and is now approaching the third station. It took its lead from Aristotelian philosophy, which was preceded by the Ionian. In the latter, discrete *visible* individualities of the world (water, air, fire) were made into principles of the whole, in a manner similar to that of every primit-

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ive religion, wherein discrete observed agencies of nature were formed into gods. In the Middle Ages (pure Christianity had already gone astray long before), the simple unity which had been gained in Aristotelian philosophy through the condensation of all forms then became the philosophically pruned God of the Christian Church; for Scholasticism is nothing other than philosophical monotheism.

This monotheism then metamorphosed through Scotus Erigena, Vanini, Bruno, and Spinoza into philosophical pantheism, which, under the influence of a particular branch of philosophy (that is, of critical idealism: Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Kant) was shaped further: on one hand, into pantheism without process (Schopenhauer), and, on the other, into pantheism with development (Schelling, Hegel). That is, it was driven to extremes.

Most of the educated people of all civilised nations whose foundation is Western culture presently move within this philosophical pantheism (it is all the same whether the simple unity which pervades the world be called will or idea, or matter or the absolute)—just as the noble Indians did at the time of Vedanta philosophy. But now the day of reaction has come.

The individual demands, louder than ever, the restoration of his torn up and trampled but inalienable right.

This work is the first attempt to give him that right unconditionally.

The philosophy of redemption is the continuation of the doctrines of Kant and of Schopenhauer, and the confirmation of Buddhism and of pure Christianity. It amends and supplements those philosophical systems, and reconciles these religions with science.

As a philosophy it finds atheism not on some faith, as these religions do, but on *scientific knowledge*, and so, for the first time, atheism has been given a scientific foundation.

Atheism will also become part of the scientific knowledge of humanity, for humanity is ripe for it. Humanity has come of age.



The first motion and the arising of the world are one and the same. The transformation of the simple unity into the world of multiplicity, the transition from the transcendent to the immanent domain, was precisely this first motion. It is not the task of physics to explain the first motion; physics has to accept it as a fact that has been found already in the Analytics, in the immanent domain but close to the boundary of the transcendent, which is added on in thought. This is why even in the Physics the final expression for this first motion cannot be gained, and we must simply characterise it, from our current perspective, as the disintegration of the simple unity into a world of multiplicity.

All subsequent motions were only continuations of this first motion, *i.e.*, they could not be anything other than, again, the disintegration or further fragmentation of the ideas.

In the first ages of the world, this further disintegration was only able to express itself through real division of the simple substances and through being compounded. Every simple chemical force was obsessed with extending its individuality, *i.e.*, with modifying its motion, but in every other force it stumbled upon the same obsession, and so arose the most terrible struggles of the ideas against each other in the most intense, excited states. The result was always a chemical compounding, *i.e.*, the victory of the stronger over a weaker force and the entry of the new idea into the ceaseless struggle. The striving of the compound was at first directed at maintaining itself, then, when possible, at extending its individuality further. But against both strivings there entered from all sides other ideas, first to dissolve the compound, then to compound themselves with the divided ideas.

In the continuation of this ceaseless fight of the imperishable ideas which lay at the foundation of all compounds, the celestial bodies were formed, of which our earth gradually became ripe for organic life. If we here interrupt our development and take the present individuals and their states as final products, then the question immediately forces itself upon us: What has happened? All the ideas from which our earth was composed at that time were in the fiery primordial nebula on which the Kantian-Laplacian theory is

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based. There a wild struggle of gases, vapours, chaos; here a closed world-body with a solid crust whose depths were filled by a hot sea; and above all of it a vaporous, nebulous, carbon-dioxide-containing atmosphere.

What has happened? Or better: Are the individual wills of which this earth is constituted, this earth which has been liberated from becoming, the very same wills which spun in the fiery primordial nebula? Certainly! The *genetic* context is there. But is the *essence* of some individuality still the same one that it was at the beginning of the world? No! It has changed. Its force has *lost intensity*. It has become *weaker*.

This is the great truth taught by geology. A gas, according to its innermost essence, its drive, is stronger than a liquid and this in turn is stronger than a solid body. Let us not forget that the world has a *finite* sphere of force, and that for this reason some idea or other, whose intensity abates, cannot be strengthened again without another idea losing force. A strengthening is nevertheless possible but always at the expense of another force, or in other words: If, in the struggle of the inorganic ideas, one of these is weakened, then the objectified sum of forces in the universe is weakened, and for this deficiency there is no substitute precisely because the world is finite and came into existence with a particular force.

If we therefore assume that our earth should one day explode like that planet between Mars and Jupiter which broke into pieces, then the entire solid crust of the earth can certainly melt again and all liquid become vapour, but at the cost of the ideas which provide the stimuli to such events. Thus, even if the earth were thrown back into what seemed a more intense state by means of such a revolution, it has still become *weaker as a whole*, as a particular sum of force.

And if today the powerful processes on the sun ceased and all the bodies of our solar system were thereby reunited with the sun, and sun and planets blazed up in an immense celestial fire, then it would seem that the forces that constitute the solar system had transformed into a more excited state, but at the expense of the total force contained in our solar system.

Even now it is no different in the inorganic realm. The ideas struggle ceaselessly with each other. Without interruption new compounds arise and these are violently divided again, but the divided forces unite with others straight away, partly compelling the union, partly being compelled into it. And here, too, the result is *weakening of force*, although this result, because of its slow development, lies not in the plain light of day, and eludes perception.

In the organic realm, from the moment it arose, there reigned and reigns evermore as a continuation of the first motion: disintegration into multiplicity. The striving of every organism is directed merely towards maintaining itself in existence and, following this drive, it struggles on one hand for its existence and provides on the other hand, by means of procreation, for its maintenance after death.

That this growing fragmentation on one hand and the struggle for existence that thereby becomes more intense and terrible on the other must have the same result as the struggle in the inorganic realm—namely, weakening of the individuals—is clear. The fact that the strongest individual (in the broadest sense) remains the victor in the struggle for existence and the weaker individual surrenders only seems to speak against this fact; for the stronger may usually gain the victory, to be sure, but in every new generation the stronger individuals are less strong, the weaker individuals weaker than those in the previous generation.

We thus see in the organic as in the inorganic realm a fundamental motion: disintegration into multiplicity, and in the former as in the latter we see as the first consequence: conflict, struggle and war, and as the second consequence: the weakening of force. But the disintegration into multiplicity as well as the two consequences of this disintegration are in every respect greater in the organic realm than in the inorganic.

Here the questions are forced upon us: In what relations do the two realms stand to each other? And is there between both really a chasm that cannot be bridged?

Now, in physics, as we know, the first motion presents itself as disintegration of the transcendent unity into multiplicity. All mo-

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tions that followed it bear the same character. Disintegration into multiplicity, life, motion—all of these expressions describe one and the same thing. The disintegration of unity into multiplicity is the fundamental law in the inorganic as well as the organic realm. In the latter, however, it finds a much more extensive application: it cuts much deeper, and its consequences—the struggle for existence and the weakening of force—are greater.

No chasm [therefore] separates the inorganic bodies from organisms. The organic realm is only a higher rung of the inorganic; it is a *more complete form* of the struggle for existence, *i.e.*, of the *weakening of force*.

As frightful, indeed as ludicrous as it may sound to say that man is fundamentally a chemical compound and differs from such a compound only insofar as he has a different motion, it is yet a true result of the Physics. It loses its repellent character when one keeps firmly in view the fact that wherever one may investigate nature, one always finds but one principle, the individual will, which wants only one thing: to live, to live. The essence of a stone is simpler than that of a lion, but only on the surface; fundamentally it is the same: individual will-to-life.

By tracing the organic realm back to the inorganic, immanent philosophy does indeed teach the same thing as materialism, but it is not for that reason identical with materialism. The fundamental difference which exists between them is the following.

Materialism is no *immanent* philosophical system. The first thing that it teaches is *eternal matter*, a *simple unity*, which no one has yet seen, and no one shall ever see. If materialism wanted to be immanent, *i.e.*, *merely* to be honest in the contemplation of nature, then above all it would have to declare matter to be a *collective* unity independent of the Subject and say that matter is the *sum* of so and so many simple substances. This, however, it does not do, and although no one has yet succeeded in making hydrogen from oxygen, gold from copper, materialism yet places *behind* every simple substance the mystical simple essentiality: undifferentiated matter. Neither Zeus nor Jupiter, neither the God of the Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans, nor the Brahma of the Indians, in short: no

uncognisable, transcendent essentiality has been so devoutly believed in from the depths of the human heart as that mystical divinity of the materialists: matter.

However, despite the extraordinary assumption of simple matter, an assumption which strikes all experience in the face, it is yet insufficient to explain the world. Thus, once again, materialism must deny the truth, once again it must wax transcendent and posit various mystical essences, the forces of nature, which are not identical with matter and yet are connected with it for all time. In this way, materialism rests on *two* primordial principles, or in other words: it is *transcendent dogmatic dualism*.

In immanent philosophy, by contrast, matter is *ideal*, in our heads, a subjective capacity which enables us to cognise the external world, and *substance*, though an *undifferentiated unity*, is in the same sense *ideal*, in our heads, a conjunction à posteriori gained by synthetic reason on the basis of matter, without the slightest reality and existing only in order to cognise *all* objects.

Independently of the Subject there is only *force*, only individual will in the world: a single principle.

Therefore, whereas materialism is transcendent dogmatic dualism, immanent philosophy is *pure, immanent dynamism*: a difference than which no greater can be conceived.

To call materialism the *most rational* system is thoroughly absurd. Every transcendent system is eo ipso *not* rational. Materialism, conceived only as a theoretical system of philosophy, is worse than its reputation. The truth that the simple chemical ideas are the sea from which everything organic has emerged, from which it arises and into which it sinks back, casts a purely immanent light on materialism and thereby gives it a seductive charm. But critical reason does not allow itself to be deceived. It investigates precisely, and thus finds behind the dazzling illusion that old chimera: the transcendent unity in or above or under the world and coexisting with it, which appears now in this, now in that, but always in fantastical attire.

In the Analytics we defined the character of the premundane simple unity negatively in accordance with the faculties of cognition. We found this unity to be inactive, extensionless, undifferenti-

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ated, unfragmented (simple), motionless, timeless (eternal). We have now to define it from the standpoint of the Physics.

Whatever kind of Object of nature we may contemplate, be it a gas, a liquid, a stone, a plant, an animal, a man, we always find it in relentless striving, in a ceaseless inner motion. To the transcendent unity, however, motion was foreign. The opposite of motion is rest, of which we can form for ourselves no notion; for we are not here speaking of apparent *external* rest, which in relation to the change of location of an entire Object or parts of the same we are indeed very much in a position to imagine, but of inner, absolute motionlessness. We must therefore attribute *absolute rest* to the premundane unity.

If we then reflect seriously on the dynamic coherence of the universe on one hand and on the definite character of the individuals on the other, then we recognise that everything in the world moves of *necessity*. Whatever we may contemplate: the stone dropped by our hand, the growing plant, the animal that moves upon intuitive motives and inner compulsion, the man who must surrender himself without resistance to a sufficient motive—they all are subject to the iron law of necessity. In the world there is no room for freedom. And, as we will see clearly in the Ethics, it must be so if the world is to have a sense at all.

What freedom is in a philosophical sense (*liberum arbitrium indifferentiae*) we can indeed define with words and say, for example, that it is the capacity of a man of a particular character to will or not to will in the face of a sufficient motive; but if we also reflect but a moment on this combination of words which is so easily contrived, then we recognise immediately that we will never obtain real evidence of this freedom, even if it were possible for us to examine the actions of all men to their very foundation over millennia. For us it is therefore with freedom as it is with rest. But we must attribute freedom to the simple unity, precisely because it was a simple unity. With it the compulsion of motive, the one factor of every motion known to us, falls away, for the unity was unfragmented, entirely alone, solitary.

The immanent scheme:

world of multiplicity – motion – necessity

is therefore paralleled by the transcendent scheme:

simple unity – rest – freedom.

And now we must take the final step.

In the Analytics we already found that *force*, as soon as it has passed via the thin thread of existence from the immanent into the transcendent domain, ceases to be *force*. It becomes for us as completely unfamiliar and uncognisable as the unity into which it becomes submerged. As we proceeded in that chapter, we found that what we call force is *individual will*, and in the Physics we have finally seen that the *mind* is only the function of an organ that has precipitated from the will and in its deepest foundation is nothing other than a part of a divided motion.

The fundamental principle, the will, which is so intimate, so well-known to us in the immanent domain, and the secondary principle which is subordinated to it and likewise so intimate, the mind, lose (like force) all meaning for us as soon as we allow them to pass over to the transcendent domain. They forfeit their nature completely and elude our cognition entirely.

We are therefore compelled to conclude that the simple unity was neither *will*, nor *mind*, nor an idiosyncratic *interpenetration of will and mind*. In this way we lose our final point of reference. We press to no avail upon the springs of our elaborate, miraculous apparatus for cognising the external world: senses, understanding, reason—all go lame. Vainly we hold up the principles found within ourselves, in self-consciousness—will and mind—as a mirror towards the mysterious, invisible essence on the opposing elevation of the divide, and we hope that essence will reveal itself in those principles: yet they reflect no image. But now we also have the right to give this essence that familiar name which from time immemorial has designated what no imaginative power, no flight of the boldest fancy, no thinking however deep or abstract, no composed, devout temperament, no ecstatic mind rapt on high has ever attained: *God*.

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But this simple unity *was*; it *is* no more. It has fragmented itself, changing its essence entirely and completely into a world of multiplicity. *God has died and His death was the life of the world.*

Herein lie for the sober-minded thinker two truths which deeply gratify the mind and uplift the heart. We have firstly a *pure, immanent* domain, in or behind or above which no force resides (call it what one will) which has the individuals do now this, now that, like the concealed puppeteer his puppets. We are then uplifted by the truth that everything which now is existed *prior to* the world *in God*. We existed in Him, we can use no other word. If we wanted to say: we lived and moved in Him, then this would be false, for we would be transferring activities of the things of this world onto an essence which was totally inactive and motionless.

Furthermore, *we are no longer in God*; for the simple unity is dead and destroyed. On the contrary, we are in a world of multiplicity, whose individuals are compounded into a solid collective unity.

From the primordial unity we have already derived in the most unforced manner the dynamic coherence of the universe. In the same way we now derive from it the *purposiveness* in the world, which no reasonable person will deny. We remain standing before the disintegration of the unity into multiplicity, without now brooding over why and how this disintegration was accomplished. The fact itself is enough. The disintegration was the deed of a simple unity, its *first* and *last*, its *sole* deed. Every will now existing acquired its essence and motion in this single deed, and for this reason everything in the world encroaches on everything else: the world has a thoroughly purposive constitution.

Finally, we derive indirectly from the primordial unity and directly from the first motion the developmental course of the universe. The disintegration into multiplicity was the first motion, and all motions that followed it—however far they may separate, intertwine, seem to become entangled and in turn disentangled—are only its continuation. The *one* motion of the world, which results *continually* from the actions of all dynamically cohering individuals, is the *fate of the universe*.

God therefore became the world, whose individuals pervasively interact. Since, however, the dynamic coherence consists in the fact that every individual will has an effect on the whole and experiences the efficacy of the whole, but efficacy is motion, so *fate* is nothing other than the *becoming* of the world, the motion of the Orphic conjuncture, the resultant of all individual motions.

I here conclude the Physics by repeating the observation that it is the first attempt to explain nature with inner and outer experience, with the individual will-to-life *alone* (without the aid of any suprasensory force). In saying this it is at the same time likely that in some places I was too timid and have overlooked important details.

One ought also to be mindful of what it means to be the master of all disciplines, the present state of natural science being what it is. The burden of the empirical material is downright oppressive, and only with the magic wand of a clear, irrefutable philosophical principle can the sifting in some way be accomplished, like the chaotic masses of stone which arranged themselves into symmetrical structures according to the sounds of the Orphic lyre.

Such an irrefutable principle is *the individual will-to-life*. I press it like a gift into the hands of every true and honest investigator of nature, wishing that it yield for him better explanations of the phenomena in his delimited field than he has heretofore arrived at. In general, however, I hope that this principle opens up a new path to science on which it is as successful as it was on that one which Bacon opened up to it by means of his inductive method.

I further consider the *pure, immanent* domain, totally freed from the spectre of transcendent essentialities, to be a second gift that I am making to the investigators of nature. How peacefully they shall be able to work in that domain!

I foresee (and I may say this, because the end result of my philosophy is the sole light which imbues my eyes and in them holds my entire will enchained): The complete separation of the immanent from the transcendent domain, the separation of God from the world and of the world from God will have the most beneficial influence on the course of humanity's development. This separation

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was to be effected only on the basis of genuine transcendental idealism; the correct cut through the ideal and real had to be made first.

I see the dawn of a beautiful day.



Already in the Analytics, pursuing the developmental chains of things-in-themselves (with the aid of time) a parte ante, we found a simple, premundane unity, before which our cognitive faculty went lame. According to the individual faculties of cognition, we defined that unity negatively as: inactive, unextended, undifferentiated, unfragmented, motionless, timeless. We then placed ourselves before this unity once again in the Physics, hoping to catch a glance of it in the mirror of those principles of will and mind which we had found in the meantime, but there too our efforts were completely unsuccessful: *nothing* revealed itself in our mirror. Here too we had therefore to define things once again only negatively, as a simple unity at rest and free, which was neither will nor mind, nor an interpenetration of will and mind.

On the other hand, we obtained three extraordinarily important *positive* results. We recognised that this simple unity, God, fragmenting itself into a world, disappeared entirely and perished; further, that the world which arose from God, precisely because it originated in a simple unity, stands without exception in a dynamic coherence and, in connection with this, that the motion creating itself continuously from the efficacy of all individual beings is fate; finally, that the premundane unity *existed*.

Existence was the thin thread which bridged the chasm between the immanent and transcendent domains, and to existence we have first to turn our attention.

The simple unity existed, we can predicate of it no more than this. Of what type this existence, this being was, is veiled from us entirely. If we want nevertheless to define it more closely, then we must again take refuge in negation and state that it bears no resemblance to any kind of being with which we are familiar, for all being

with which we are familiar is *moved* being, is a *becoming*, whereas the simple unity was motionless, in absolute rest. Its being was *supra-being*.

Our positive recognition that the simple unity existed remains entirely untouched by this fact; for the negation does not affect existence as such, but only the kind of existence, a kind which we cannot make comprehensible to ourselves.

Now, from this positive recognition that the simple unity existed flows of its own accord that other, very important realisation that the simple unity also had to have a particular *essence*, for every existens posits an essentia, and it is simply inconceivable that a premundane unity existed but was in itself without an essence, i.e., that it was nothingness.

But of the essence, the essentia of God, as of His existens, we can also form for ourselves not the slightest notion. Everything which we apprehend and cognise *in* the world as the essence of individual things is inseparably connected with motion, and God was at rest. If, however, we want to define His essence, then this can only be done negatively, and we must state that the essence of God was an incomprehensible, but in itself quite *definite supra-essence*.

Even our positive recognition that the simple unity had a definite essence remains entirely untouched by this negation.

Thus far everything is clear. But it also seems as if human wisdom had here reached an end and the disintegration of the unity into multiplicity were quite simply unfathomable.

But we are not yet entirely helpless. We have precisely the disintegration of the unity into multiplicity, the transition of the transcendent into the immanent domain, God's death and the birth of the world. We are confronted with a *deed*, the first and sole deed of the simple unity. The immanent domain *followed* on the transcendent, something has become which previously was not. Should it not be possible here to fathom the deed itself, without becoming fantastical and wandering off into wretched hallucinations? We want to be very careful indeed.

We are nevertheless confronted with a process which we can conceive of in no other way than as a deed; we are also thoroughly

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justified in calling that same process a deed, for we are still standing entirely in the immanent domain, which is nothing other than this very deed.

If, however, we ask after the *factors* which brought this deed about, then we leave the immanent domain and find ourselves on the “shoreless ocean” of the transcendent, which is forbidden us, forbidden because all of our faculties of cognition go lame in that domain.

In the immanent domain, *in* the world, the factors (in themselves) of one deed or another are always known to us. We have constantly on one hand an individual will of an entirely definite character and on the other hand a sufficient motive. Now, if we wanted to use this unshakeable fact in addressing the present question, then we would simply have to describe the world as a deed which sprang from a divine *will* and a divine *intelligence*, i.e., we would be placing ourselves in complete contradiction with the results of immanent philosophy; for we have found that the simple unity was neither will, nor mind, nor an interpenetration of will and mind; or, in Kant’s words, we would in the most arbitrary and sophistical manner be making immanent principles into *constitutive* principles in the transcendent domain, which is *toto genere* different from the immanent.

But here all of a sudden there is opened to us a way out, which we may take without reservation.

We are confronted, as I have mentioned, with a *deed* of the simple unity. If we wanted to call this deed of deeds, as we call all the deeds known to us in the world, a *motivated act of will*, then we would become unfaithful to our vocation, betray the truth, and be simplistic dreamers; for we may attribute to God neither will nor mind. The immanent principles, will and mind, cannot at all be transferred onto the premundane essence, we are not allowed to make them into *constitutive* principles for the *derivation* of the deed.

In contrast, we may make these same immanent principles into *regulative* principles for “the mere *judgement*” of the deed, i.e., we may attempt to explain the arising of the world by conceiving it *as if* it had been a motivated act of will.

The difference is patent.

In the latter case we merely make a problematic judgement, by analogy with the deeds in this world, without madly presuming to render any kind of apodictic judgement about God's essence. In the former case, in contrast, it is claimed without the slightest hesitation that the essence of God, like that of man, was an inextricable compound of will and mind. Whether one says this or expresses oneself more vaguely and calls the will of God *potentia-will*, resting, inactive will, and the mind of God *potentia-mind*, resting, inactive mind—one is always striking the results of honest inquiry in the face: for *will* implies *motion* and mind is a part of the will which has precipitated out and has a particular motion. A resting will is a *contradictio in adjecto* and bears the mark of logical contradiction.

Accordingly, we set foot upon no forbidden path if we conceive God's deed *as if* it had been a motivated act of will and thus, merely for judging the deed, *temporarily* ascribe will and mind to His essence.

That we must ascribe to it will *and* mind and not will alone is clear, for God was in absolute solitude, and nothing existed besides Him. He was unable to be motivated from *without*, but only by means of Himself. In His self-consciousness were mirrored His essence and its existence, nothing more.

It follows from this with logical compulsion that God was able to exercise his freedom (the *liberum arbitrium indifferentiae*) in only a *single* choice, namely: either to *remain* as He was or *not to be*. To be sure, He also had the freedom *to be other* than he was; but in all directions of this being-other, freedom had to remain latent, because we can conceive no more complete and better being than that of a simple unity.

Thus, only one deed was possible for God, and specifically one *free* deed, because He was subject to no compulsion whatever, because He was able to forgo that deed as well as carry it out, namely, to enter *absolute nothingness*, the *nihil negativum*, *i.e.*, to annihilate Himself completely, to cease to exist.

Now, if this was His only possible deed and we, in contrast, face an entirely different deed, the *world*, whose being is a constant becoming, then the question throws itself at us: Why did God, if He

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wanted not to be, not crumble into nothingness *directly*? You all must ascribe omnipotence to God, for nothing constrained His power; consequently, if He wanted not to be, then He had also to be annihilated straightaway. But instead there arose a world of multiplicity, a world of struggle. This is an obvious contradiction. How do you all propose to solve it?

The response to this is firstly: It is on one hand certainly established logically that only a single deed was possible for the simple unity: to annihilate itself completely; on the other hand, the world proves that this deed did not occur. But this contradiction can only be an apparent one. Both deeds—the only one logically possible and the actual one—must at root be capable of unification. But how?

It is clear that they can only be unified if it can be proven that God's direct annihilation was impossible due to some *obstacle* or other.

We have therefore to search for this obstacle.

In the question above it was remarked: "You all must ascribe omnipotence to God, for nothing constrained His power." This sentence, however, is false in its generality. God existed alone, in absolute solitude, and it is consequently correct that He was not constrained by anything outside Him; His power was therefore an omnipotence in the sense that nothing lying *outside* Him constrained it. But it was no omnipotence with respect to His *own* power, or in other words, His power was not to be annihilated by itself, the simple unity was unable, by means of itself, to cease to exist.

God had the freedom to *be* as He wanted, but He was not free of His own particular *essence*. God had the omnipotence to carry out His will to *be* some way or other; but He did not have the power *not* to be all at once.

The simple unity had the power to be, in some way or other, other than it was, but it did not have the power suddenly not to be at all. In the former case it remained in *being*, in the latter case it was supposed *not* to be; in this latter case, however, it stood in its own way; for even if we cannot fathom God's essence, we do at least know *that* it was a particular supra-essence, and that this particular

supra-essence, reposing in a particular supra-being, was, as a simple unity, not by means of itself able not to be. This was the obstacle.

Theologians of every age have unreservedly predicated omnipotence of God, *i.e.*, they attributed to Him the power to carry out His every will. In doing this, however, none of those theologians thought of the possibility that God can also will Himself to become nothingness. No one has ever considered this possibility. But if one considers it seriously, then one sees that in this *single* case God's omnipotence was constrained by nothing other than itself, that it was no omnipotence in relation to itself.

According to this view, God's one deed, the disintegration into multiplicity, presents itself as the *carrying out* of the logical deed, of the *resolution* not to be, or in other words: The world is the *means* to the *end* of non-being, and specifically the world is the *sole means possible* to that end. God recognised that only by means of the *becoming* of a real world of multiplicity, only by means of the immanent domain, by means of the world, would He be able to convert from *supra-being* to *non-being*.

Incidentally, were it not clear that God's essence was the obstacle to His dissolution into nothingness, then our ignorance of the obstacle would be no cause for concern. We would then simply have to postulate an uncognisable obstacle in the transcendent domain; for in what follows we shall, in the purely immanent domain and leaving no room to doubt, obtain the result that the *universe* is in fact moving out of being into non-being.

The questions which one could here raise, namely, why God did not want non-being *sooner*, and why He preferred non-being to supra-being at all, are devoid of all meaning; for as to the first question, "sooner" is a temporal concept, which in the context of eternity lacks all sense, and as to the second, it is adequately answered by the *fact of the world*. Non-being must simply have earned preference over supra-being, or else God in his perfect wisdom would not have chosen it. And this all the more when one considers the torments experienced by the higher ideas familiar to us, by the animals nearest to us and by men, torments with which alone non-being can be purchased.

Synkrētic

We have only provisionally attributed will and mind to God's essence and conceived God's deed *as if* it had been a motivated act of will in order to gain a regulative principle for the mere judgement of the deed. By this route we also arrived at our objective, and speculative reason may rest content.

However, we are not allowed to leave our idiosyncratic standpoint between the immanent and transcendent domains (we are hanging from the thin thread of existence over the bottomless abyss separating both domains) in order to set foot once more in the firm world, on the sure ground of experience, until we have *declared loudly* once again that God's essence is neither a compound of will and mind, like man's, nor was it an interpenetration of will and mind. The world's true origin will therefore *never* be fathomed by a human mind. All that one can and may do—a warrant of which we too have made use—is infer the divine act through analogy with deeds in the world, but always keeping in mind and never losing sight of the fact that:

we see through a glass, darkly (1 Cor 13);

and that, according to our limited endowments, we concoct piecemeal an act which, as the unitary act of a simple unity, can *never* be apprehended by a human mind.

Yet the result of this piecemeal composition is satisfactory. Let us also not forget that we could be equally satisfied if the ability to see the divine act through a glass darkly were denied us; for the transcendent domain and its simple unity have vanished without a trace in our world, in which only individual wills exist and beside or behind which nothing more exists, just as *before* the world *only* the simple unity existed. And this world is so rich, it responds so distinctly and clearly to an honest interrogation that the sober-minded thinker turns with a light heart away from the “shoreless ocean” and devotes all his mental power to the divine act, to the book of nature, which lies at all times open before him.

Before we proceed, we want to summarise these results:

- 1) God wanted not to be;

- 2) His essence was the obstacle to His instant entry into non-being;
- 3) this essence had to disintegrate into a world of multiplicity whose individual essences all strive for non-being;
- 4) in this striving they impede each other mutually, they struggle with each other and in this way *weaken* their force;
- 5) God's whole essence passed into the world in a modified form, as a particular sum of force;
- 6) the whole world, the universe, has *one* objective: non-being, and achieves it through continuous weakening of its sum of force;
- 7) every individual, through weakening of its force, will be brought to a point in its developmental course where its striving for annihilation can be fulfilled.

Everything which now *is*, once *was* in the simple premundane unity. Therefore, everything which *is*, figuratively speaking, took part in God's resolution not to be, resolved *in him* to convert into non-being. The retarding element, the essence of God, made the instant carrying-out of this resolution impossible. The world, the process in which this retarding element is *gradually eliminated*, had to arise. This process, the general fate of the universe, was determined by the divine wisdom (we speak always figuratively), and *in this divine wisdom* everything which *is* determined its own *individual life-course*.

Now Buddha is correct: Everything that affects me, all the blows and blessings of chance, are *my work*—*I willed* them. But I do not bring them about with gradual, uncognisable force *in* the world; rather, *prior to* the world, *in* the simple unity, I determined that they should affect me.

Now pantheism too is correct: The *fate of the world* is a unitary one, is the motion of the entire world towards *one* goal; but no simple unity *in* the world carries out this motion, having an effect in *apparent* individuals now in this, now in that direction; rather, a simple unity *prior to* the world determined the entire process, and *in* the world *only real individuals* carry out this process.

Synkrētic

And now Plato too is correct, who in the *Republic* lets each man, before he enters life, choose for himself his own fate, but he does not choose it *immediately prior to birth*; rather, *prior to the world in general*, in the transcendent domain, when the immanent domain still was not, each man himself determined his own lot.

Finally, *freedom* is now united with *necessity*. The world is the *free* act of a *premundane* unity; *in the world*, however, there reigns only necessity, because otherwise the goal could *never* be reached. Everything is interlinked of necessity; everything conspires toward a single goal.

And every action of the individual (not only of man, but of *all* ideas in the world) is at once *free* and *necessary*: free, because it was resolved upon *prior to the world in a free unity*; necessary, because the resolution is being realised, is becoming a deed *in the world*.



Man has the natural tendency to personify fate and to apprehend absolute nothingness, which stares at him from every grave, as a place of eternal peace, as a *city of peace, Nirvana*—as a new Jerusalem:

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. (Rev, 21: 4)

It cannot be denied that the notion of a personal, loving Father-God takes deeper hold of the human heart, “the defiant and despondent thing”, than abstract fate, and that the notion of a kingdom of heaven where beatified individuals without wants rest blissful in eternal contemplation awakens a more powerful yearning than absolute nothingness. Here, too, immanent philosophy is also mild and benevolent. The principal concern remains that man has overcome the world through *scientific knowledge*. Whether he leaves the cognised fate as it is or whether he gives it once again the lineaments of a loyal father; whether he leaves the cognised objective of the world standing as absolute nothingness or whether he transforms it into a garden of eternal peace bathed in light—this is completely

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beside the point. Who would want to interrupt this innocent, harmless game of the fancy?

A fiction that gladdens me,
Is worth a truth that saddens me.

Wieland

The wise man, however, looks *absolute nothingness* firmly and joyfully in the eye.