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“Introduction” to *Transcendental Philosophy* (1800-1801)

Excerpt

Friedrich Schlegel

Translated, introduced, and annotated by Joseph Carew*

Friedrich Schlegel was, in many respects, the leading figure of early German Romanticism (*Frühromantik*) and one of its most significant theoreticians. He was responsible, along with his brother August Wilhelm Schlegel, for the establishment, in 1798, of the journal *Athenaeum*, a gesture that was the veritable founding of the movement and gave it an official organ. During its three volumes and six issues that ran from 1798–1800, many of the movement’s now most renowned names were contributors (e.g., the two Schlegel brothers, Dorothea von Schlegel, Caroline Schlegel [later Schelling], Novalis, the pen name of Georg Philipp Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg, and Friedrich Schleiermacher). Indeed, many of the writings that we now consider the most crucial to the movement, both philosophical and poetic, appeared in its pages. These include Schlegel’s *Fragments*, where the perhaps most famous definition of Romantic poetry is given, Novalis’ *Hymns to the Night*, and Schleiermacher’s *Speeches on Religion*. Without a shadow of a doubt, these years were the heyday of early German Romanticism and Schlegel’s role in its success and productivity was central, to say the least.

Change, however, was on the horizon in 1800, just two years after the journal got off to a hot start—change for Schlegel and early German

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Romanticism itself. The journal was being discontinued. *Athenaeum* did not find the public that was hoped for, which put a wrench in Schlegel's plans of trying to make it as an independent author. So, in the summer of 1800 he turned to pursue academics and registered in the doctoral program of the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Jena.¹ Instead of a dissertation, he submitted two previously published works for evaluation: *The Greeks and Romans* and *History of the Poesy of the Greeks and Romans*, the first published in 1797 and the second in 1798. Jena would have been a natural choice for Schlegel to get a doctorate. There are several reasons why. First of all, he was already there. More importantly, though, Jena had been the home base of early German Romanticism and where many of its representatives lived, which in turn permitted a free exchange of ideas and collaboration between them. In addition, it was a hotbed of post-Kantian German Idealist thought. That being said, Jena, too, was undergoing shifts of its own. At the time of the foundation of the *Athenaeum*, Jena was the bustling intellectual capital of Germany. The presence of some of the best philosophical and scientific minds of the period there attracted thinkers, artists, and students alike to the small town. But in 1799, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, then a kind of celebrity philosopher, was driven out of the University of Jena due to the accusation of atheism leveled against him. Other big names in other disciplines were getting headhunted. Jena was losing the appeal it had, making people look for greener pastures. Then, in 1801, Novalis died, with Schlegel at his side. Hölderlin's mental health was collapsing. Little could have Schlegel known that by June of 1802, he would find himself in Paris and that, in the spring of 1803, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, whose *Naturphilosophie* gave much inspiration to the project of early German Romanticism and who, too, was an intimate member of its group, would also leave Jena behind for the University of Würzburg. By that point, the other early German Romantics had long left the city. In short, in 1800 the close-knit circle of early German Romanticism was already in the process of disbanding. Just a few years later, the representatives who were still living and sane were slowly reconsidering their philosophical allegiances. Schlegel himself in 1808 converted to Catholicism, seemingly leaving behind the Romanticism of his youth.

¹ For more detailed information on the historical background of Schlegel's doctorate and habilitation, which form the immediate context of the lectures *Transcendental Philosophy* and upon which I here rely, see Ernst Behler, "Friedrich Schlegels Vorlesungen über Transzendentalphilosophie. Jena (1800–1801)," in *Transzendentalphilosophie und Spekulation. Der Streit um die Gestalt einer Ersten Philosophie (1799-1807)*, ed. Walter Jaeschke (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1993), 53ff.

While Schlegel was awarded a doctorate on the basis of *The Greeks and Romans* and *History of the Poesy of the Greeks and Romans* and the requirement for a normal oral defense was waived, he nevertheless had to give a test lecture to the Faculty of Philosophy at Jena in its place to officially obtain his doctorate. The title of the talk was “Concerning Enthusiasm or Concerning Fanaticism” and took place in October, just a few months after he initially registered in the doctoral program. This lecture permitted him to acquire a teaching licence (a *licentiam legendis*). One of the lecture courses Schlegel decided to give was *Transcendental Philosophy*, which was, interestingly enough, listed in the course catalogue even before Schlegel had the right to teach it. Around this time, Schlegel also announced his disputation (*disputatio*) on Plato, which would enable him to receive his habilitation. The lectures began on 27 October, 1800 and ended on 24 March, 1801, incidentally coming to a close only ten days after he successfully completed his disputation. They were attended by around sixty individuals—which is a decently impressive number, given that, over its history to that point, the town of Jena never had more than 5,000 inhabitants. In the audience were the philosophers Jakob Friedrich Fries and even Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Any textual trace of the lectures was long thought lost to the ravages of time, whether it be a manuscript or a transcript, partial or complete. But then, over a century later in 1927, Josef Körner discovered a transcript, the author of which remains unknown, and which was edited and published for the first time in 1935.² While some scholars have lamented the fact that Schlegel’s manuscript was never found, it is worth mentioning, in this regard, that Schlegel himself admitted that he more often extemporized on the basis of notes than he read from an already written text (the latter being a common practice—the German for “lecture” [*Vorlesung*] means, quite literally, “a reading aloud”). Since the transcript’s first publication in 1935, it has been re-edited as volume 12 of the critical edition of Schlegel’s works³ and appeared as a stand-alone volume in the “Philosophical Library” series of the Felix Meiner Publishing House.⁴ The translation that follows is the first half

² Friedrich Schlegel, *Transcendentalphilosophie*, in *Neue philosophische Schriften. Erstmals in Druck gelegt, erläutert und mit einer Einleitung in Fr. Schlegels philosophischen Entwicklungsgang (Mit einer Faksimilereproduktion von Schlegels Habilitationsgesuch an die Universität Jena)*, ed. Josef Körner (Frankfurt am Main: Gerhard Schulte-Bulmke 1935), 115-221.

³ Friedrich Schlegel, *Friedrich Schlegel – Kritische Ausgabe seiner Werke*, ed. Ernst Behler, Jean Jacques Anstett, and Hans Heichner (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1958–).

⁴ Friedrich Schlegel, *Transcendentalphilosophie*, ed. Michael Elsässer (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1991).

of Schlegel's Introduction to the lectures.⁵ It is part of the project of translating the transcript in full for the first time in English.

The 1800-1801 Jena lectures *Transcendental Philosophy* are of interest for numerous reasons, both for scholars of early German Romanticism, German Idealism, and the history of post-Kantian philosophy, and for those intellectually curious about the movement and that period of Western philosophy. Let's briefly focus on four salient ones: their form; their content; their historical backdrop; and their audience. What holds for the lectures as a whole equally holds for the first half of their Introduction, where one finds all the major ideas and doctrines that will occupy Schlegel and which also occupy early German Romanticism as a movement from start to finish: our consciousness of the absolute; our yearning for it; the relativity of truth; the symbolic nature of knowledge; and the infinity of philosophy. The lectures begin with a bang and, like any good work of philosophy or literature, intuitively broach the major themes that will be fleshed out in full.

First of all, there is the matter of the form the lectures take. While much has been made of the role of the fragment in Romantic thought, namely, the supposedly intrinsically anti- or asystematic nature of their vision of philosophy and truth, the lectures adopt something quite atypical in early German Romanticism: a systematic exposition. Indeed, Schlegel is clear that the method that he employs is the same as that of physics and mathematics: it proceeds via problems, theorems, axioms, and constructions—even if the method nonetheless upholds that the system that thereby arises is only ever an approximation (*Approximation*) of a truth that constitutively exceeds it. It is a marriage of rationalism and relativism. Furthermore, the system that Schlegel builds is a full-fledged system in the precise sense that the term acquires in post-Kantian philosophy, which is to say that it assumes the form of “a self-subsisting whole” (*ein für sich bestehendes Ganze*),⁶ “a scientific whole that is complete in itself” (*ein wissenschaftliches Ganze, das in sich vollendet ist*).⁷

⁵ The pagination in the margins of the translation given below refers to the critical edition. Each page break is marked by “|.” In notes, the lectures are cited as *Transcendental Philosophy* followed by the pagination. An earlier translation of the full Introduction exists: “Friedrich Schlegel: Introduction to the Transcendental Philosophy (1800),” *Theory as Practice: A Critical Anthology of Early German Romantic Writings*, ed. and trans. Jochen Schulte-Sasse et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 240–277. A French translation of the first half of the Introduction also exists: Friedrich Schlegel, “Philosophie transcendante. Introduction,” in *Symphilosophie: F. Schlegel à Iéna, avec la traduction de la Philosophie transcendante (Introduction – Philosophie de la philosophie)*, ed. Denis Thouard (Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 2002), 169–177. Both have been consulted for the preparation of the present translation.

⁶ Schlegel, *Transcendental Philosophy*, 3.

⁷ Schlegel, *Transcendental Philosophy*, 18.

As one would expect from a system builder of that generation, the terrain of subject matters the lectures cover is vast: its own method, epistemology, metaphysics, the history of consciousness, a theory of human nature, morality, politics, religion, and even meta-philosophy. Schlegel's *Transcendental Philosophy* is therefore a unique work in the early German Romantic corpus.

Secondly, the lectures irrefutably situate Schlegel's brand of Romanticism within the context of that strand of post-Kantian philosophy that sought to internally overcome Kant's critique of the possibility of metaphysical knowledge by combining metaphysics with epistemology, realism with idealism, or Spinoza with Fichte. They do so by inscribing the perspective of consciousness within the absolute such that, everywhere in the natural universe, there is some, even if only inchoate, awareness. That is, there is no qualitative difference as we move from inanimate matter to human experience, but a quantitative one: "Our formula [...] goes roughly something like this: 'The minimum of the I is equal to the maximum of nature; and the minimum of nature is equal to the maximum of the I.' In other words, the smallest sphere of consciousness is equal to the largest sphere of nature and vice versa."⁸ But this is not a simple pantheism; it entails, for Schlegel, that consciousness itself is not something external to the absolute, whereby the question of how to transcend its perspective to arrive at reality does not arise in the same way as it would in a strictly Kantian framework. Consciousness itself is a fundamental dimension of the absolute. Put differently, consciousness itself participates in the absolute's own existence and self-development. In Schlegel's words, "*the sole predicate of the infinite is consciousness.*"⁹

In this manner, the lectures ask us to qualify, if not put into question, those readings of Schlegel (and, by implication, perhaps Romanticism as a whole) that are strictly epistemological. There is, for instance, the interpretation of Manfred Frank who sees the absolute as a mere regulative ideal for the systematic organization of knowledge à la Kant;¹⁰ and there is, in a similar vein but more radical, the interpretation of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy that the absolute is a fiction.¹¹ Schlegel is definitively a post-

⁸ Schlegel, *Transcendental Philosophy*, 6.

⁹ Schlegel, *Transcendental Philosophy*, 6.

¹⁰ See, to mention one of many possible texts, Manfred Frank, "'Alle Wahrheit ist Relativ, Alles Wissen Symbolisch'—Motive der Grundsatz-Skepsis in der frühen Jenaer Romantik (1796)," *Revue internationale de philosophie* 50 (1996): 403–436.

¹¹ See Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*, trans. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988).

Kantian, but closer to the Schelling of *Naturphilosophie* than to Fichte's transcendental philosophy wherein all knowledge is a construct of the subject proceeding from *a priori* categories, despite appearances otherwise in other works. As Schlegel succinctly puts it in the concluding Part III of the lectures: "All philosophy is the philosophy of the universe."¹²

Thirdly, there is the matter of when the lectures occurred in the history of post-Kantian philosophy. Schlegel's lectures came to fruition at a time when the early German Romantic movement was, well, starting to come to a close after a period of frenzied productivity. One should therefore look at these lectures as the culmination of Schlegel's engagement with the main ideas, doctrines, and themes of the movement. If we are right to take Schelling's 1801 *Presentation of My System of Philosophy* as a historically momentous, decisive text that clearly shows the difference between Schelling's and Fichte's systems, where the disciple takes his distance from the teacher, then Schlegel's 1800-1801 lectures *Transcendental Philosophy*, too, ought to be taken as a historically momentous, decisive text that clearly shows the difference between Fichte's and Schlegel's systems and, in addition, the difference between Schlegel's and Schelling's systems—no matter how much Schlegel did, in point of fact, learn from Fichte and Schelling and adapt into his own thinking. The lectures are of great significance to any attempt to properly situate early German Romanticism in post-Kantian philosophy and in German Idealism in particular. They testify, both historically and philosophically, to a moment of multiple transitions.

Lastly, there is the fourth reason why these lectures are of interest: the audience to whom they were addressed. Schlegel's *Transcendental Philosophy* was intended, first and foremost, for philosophy students. Very appropriately, both the logical structure of the system that Schlegel builds and the formulations he provides for his own thought and the Romantic project are at times very lucid, precise, and informative. From beginning to end, there is an obvious focus and thread to follow. In this regard, the lectures present a certain advantage for those more expressly interested in the philosophical commitments of the Romantic movement over the aphoristic character of many other writings from Schlegel and his fellow collaborators or, as they would perhaps prefer us to put it, his fellow symphilosophers, which often combine genres and diverse subject matters, as well as over the suggestive character of their more literary achievements. To be true to the spirit of these lectures as intended for students, many of the notes added are of an explanatory and historical nature.

¹² Schlegel, *Transcendental Philosophy*, 91.

Transcendental Philosophy

Friedrich Schlegel

Introduction

| 3

We philosophize—that is a fact. We thus begin; we start with something. That something is this: *a striving* for a type of knowledge that is of an entirely *sui generis* sort, a type of knowledge that should refer to the human being taken as a whole. It should not, therefore, refer solely to *the actions performed by human beings*—for actions are, as it were, only one pole of the human being—rather, it should also refer to *our knowledge* of the human being. That something will therefore have to be this: *a type of knowledge of knowledge*.

This would be, in a manner of speaking, a definition of philosophy. But when we begin to philosophize, it cannot serve as our main thread. For were I to take as my starting point the proposition “Philosophy is a type of *knowledge of knowledge*,” there would then always be some type of knowledge that is presupposed. *Philosophy is an experiment* and that’s why anyone who is going to philosophize will always have to begin from scratch. (It is not the same in philosophy as it is in other sciences, where one takes what others have already achieved in the name of science and builds upon it. Philosophy is really a self-subsisting whole and anyone who is going to philosophize will have to begin purely and simply, from scratch.)

Thus, we, too, begin purely and simply.

Philosophy is supposed to be a type of knowledge and, indeed, a type of absolute knowledge; we therefore have to strive to ensure that every step that we take is *necessary* and contains nothing hypothetical.

Hence, the *method* according to which we will proceed will be the method of *physics* or *mathematics*. Namely, our investigations will be a type of *experimenting*, as in physics, or a type of *constructing*, as with mathematics. The method of these sciences is completely and utterly *independent* and that’s why it also has to be applied here.

Logic, as the organon of truth, provides us with *the principle of non-contradiction* and *the principle of sufficient reason*. Admittedly, by appealing to them we gain nothing in terms of the material of truth; but we nonetheless have to avail ourselves of them when stating and expressing what we discover through philosophizing. But the source of *truth* lies, for us, far higher than in

these principles, inasmuch as *skepsis* also lays claim to these principles.¹ In addition, these principles cannot satisfy us with regard to *their form* either. We have to search for something higher.

| 4 To be sure, Fichte also uses these principles in his philosophy, but the meaning that they there acquire is such that they are no longer the same principles at all.²

Logic also offers us a definition of truth, namely, that truth is *the correspondence of a representation with its subject matter*.³ That says no more, and should also say no more, than what a sign says about the thing that is supposed to be denoted.

PROBLEM I: *Determining the character of philosophy*.⁴

(The word “character” means something different than “definition.” A *definitio* assigns a genus and specific differentia ([*per*] *genus* and *differentiam specificam*);⁵ but this is something that we in philosophy do not desire and cannot do, since the specific differentia would be infinite.) If we have charged ourselves with the task of *determining the character of philosophy*, that does not

¹ Here, as elsewhere, Schlegel makes a distinction between “*skepsis*” (*Skepsis*) as a general philosophical attitude and “skepticism” (*Skeptizismus*) as the philosophical doctrine that knowledge is impossible.

² In the Jena *Foundation of the Entire Doctrine of Science (Wissenschaftslehre)* from 1794-1795, Fichte takes as his starting point the logical principle of identity and then the logical principle of non-contradiction. He endeavors to show that these putatively first principles of logic depend, in fact, upon two more fundamental first principles, namely, the principles “I am” and “I am not the Not-I.” These correspond to the mind’s radical power to posit itself absolutely and unconditionally as well to posit content that is other than it, which is the basis of consciousness and hence makes even logic possible. *Foundation of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre and Related Writings (1794-95)*, ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 200-210; *J. G. Fichte-Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, ed. Reinhard Lauth, Walter Jacobs, Hans Gliwitzky, and Erich Fuchs (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1962-2012), I / 2: 255-268.

³ *Gegenstand*.

⁴ One should recall that Schlegel has just finished saying that he will employ the method of physics and mathematics. See *Transcendental Philosophy*, 3. As such, several terms are now slowly introduced that should be taken in their technical meaning in those disciplines: problem, theorem, and axiom. A “problem” is, put simply, a proposition that requires a solution, via either some mathematical operation or geometric construction. More specifically in this context, it is an inquiry that, taking as its starting point some given conditions, seeks to demonstrate a fact or law. “Problem” contrasts with “theorem”: the latter stands for a proposition that, while not self-evident (like an axiom), has been demonstrated on the basis of other truths.

⁵ Here Schlegel is repeating the scholastic formulation of what a definition consists in: *definitio fit per genus proximum et differentiam specificam* (definition proceeds from the closest genus and the specific differentia).

mean *determining it with perfect precision*—that would then be us defining it—rather, it means determining it so far as it is possible for our purposes.

Aphorisms on problem I.

1st *Aphorism*: “Philosophy begins with *skepsis*.” This is a *completely and utterly negative state*. — If we wish to apply the method of mathematics and wish to construct philosophy, then we already here have one *factor*, namely, the *negative factor* in our possession. The other *factor*, the *positive factor*, will be *enthusiasm*.⁶

Philosophical *skepsis* has the peculiar trait that it also refers to the human being taken as a whole. And enthusiasm has to *have a certain directedness toward knowledge*.

2nd *Aphorism*: “The tendency of philosophy is to move toward the absolute.” But not toward something relatively absolute, but rather toward the *absolutely absolute*. In addition, we can divide the absolute according to the method of mathematics into two factors.

The negative factor is what we discover when we take the opposite of “unconditioned,” which is “the conditioned.” The latter hangs together, as it were, in an infinite chain whose originary or first link is, just like every link, purely and simply *something singular*. The originary also goes by the name “the primitive,” and the opposite of it is “totality.”

Any knowledge of the originary or primitive gives us *principles*. And any knowledge of the totality gives us *ideas*. A *principle* is therefore a type of *knowledge of the originary*. An *idea* is a *type of knowledge of the whole*.

⁶ There are two things to note. First, “enthusiasm” translates “*Enthusiasmus*,” both of which etymologically derive from the Greek “ἐνθουσιᾶσμός” (*enthousiasmós*, divine inspiration), itself related to “ἐνθουσιάζειν” (*enthousiazerein*, to be inspired or possessed by a god), a word that, in turn, relates to “ἐν” (*en*, in) and “θεός” (*theós*, god). For Schlegel, what inspires or possesses us is the absolute, which goes by many names in the lectures (e.g., the infinite, the divine). Second, “enthusiasm” is a common translation of what Kant names “*Schwärmerei*,” but which is often alternatively rendered as “visionary rapture” and “fanaticism” and which Kant defines as “a delusion of being able to see something beyond the bounds of sensibility.” *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 200) 156; *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, in *Kant's Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. The Royal Prussian (later German) Academy of Sciences (Berlin: Georg Reimer, later Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1900–), 5: 275. In Kant, *Schwärmerei* is pejorative; it is a theoretical and practical vice to be guarded against. What Schlegel has in mind should not be confused with Kant. Schlegel’s enthusiasm is, by its very nature, positive; it is, indeed, a theoretical and practical virtue. Interestingly, in the context of acquiring his doctorate in philosophy at the University of Jena, Schlegel had to give a test lecture to the Faculty of Philosophy in place of a typical oral defense. To this end, on 18 October, 1801 he gave a talk entitled “Concerning Enthusiasm or Concerning Fanaticism,” which was responsible for him obtaining a teaching license (*licentiam legendis*). No textual trace of this talk has ever been found.

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We say “principles”⁷ instead of “basic, foundational propositions”⁸; for it could very much be the case that principles are not *propositions*,⁹ but rather *facts*¹⁰; so, for instance, the principle of Fichtean philosophy, “I am I,” is not a proposition, but rather a fact. So, in physics the principle of life would be a fact if (we are only supposing this) all life arose from the reciprocal interaction of hydrogen and oxygen. So, we say “idea” instead of “concept” because what is supposed to be thereby denoted cannot be grasped in a concept according to its usual meaning and is, in a manner of speaking, *incomprehensible*,¹¹ namely, *according to how the term is intended to be used*. For example, take “The Not-I is equal to the I.”

3rd *Aphorism*: “Principles and ideas make the matter of philosophy.”

As you can tell, the matter of philosophy has been discovered. Now the question crops up: “What is the form of philosophy?” Philosophy should be concerned with the human being taken as a whole and be *a type of knowledge* about it. Anyone who acts according to any type of knowledge, acts *according to a purpose, according to a rule*, and so on. In so doing, they distinguish themselves from someone who does not act according to any type of knowledge. The fact that they act according to a purpose, according to a rule, is also something that they must express; and the term for this is “consistency”. Consistency presupposes *harmony* and both taken together are *unity*.¹² Thus:

4th *Aphorism*: “The form of philosophy is absolute unity.”

Here, there is no question of this being the unity of a system; for the latter is not absolute. As soon as something is a system, it is not absolute. Absolute unity would be something like a chaos of systems.

PROBLEM II: *Searching for the common midpoint of all principles and ideas.*

This common midpoint that we are searching for will have to be something *that would be the principle of all ideas and the idea of all principles*.

Now, in order to discover this, we must abstract from everything that is *not absolute*. This is not, however, something we do by just wishing away, while in thought, whatever is not absolute. No; we have to constitute that which stands opposed to what we are supposed to be abstracting from. We must thus posit, purely and simply, the *infinite*.

⁷ *Prinzipien*.

⁸ *Grundsätzen*.

⁹ *Sätze*.

¹⁰ *Fakta*.

¹¹ Cf. Friedrich Schlegel, “On Incomprehensibility,” trans. Peter Firchow, in *Classic and Romantic Aesthetics*, ed. J. M. Bernstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 297-307. The text takes from 1800.

¹² *Transcriber’s Note*: Consistency, the positive factor of unity; harmony, the negative factor.

If we, however, now posit the infinite, and in so doing cancel out¹³ everything that stands opposed to it, nevertheless something still remains, namely, that which *is doing the abstracting* or that which *is doing the positing*. What therefore still remains outside *the infinite* is *a consciousness of the infinite*. So, consciousness is, as it were, a *phenomenon* nearby the infinite.

And now we have, as it were, the elements that can yield a philosophy; they are, namely, *consciousness* and *the infinite*. They are, as it were, the two poles around which all philosophy revolves.

Fichtean philosophy is concerned with *consciousness*. Spinoza's philosophy, however, is concerned with *the infinite*. The formula for Fichte's philosophy is "I = I"—or, as we prefer to say in its place, "Not-I = I." This is probably a better way of putting it because, when so put, the proposition is, even in terms of how it is formulated, the most synthetic of all.

The formula for Spinoza's philosophy would run something like this: If one uses the variable *a* to think about what *is presentable* and *x* to think about *what is not presentable*, then "*a = x*."

Two more formulae come about as a result of these by combining them, namely, "Not-I = *x*"¹⁴ and "*a = I*."

This latter formula, namely, "*a = I*" is the formula of our philosophy. The proposition is *indirect* and involves canceling out the error of *the finite* so that the *infinite* will arise on its own.

Our formula, still considered from a positive point of view, goes roughly something like this: "The minimum of the I is equal to the maximum of nature; and the minimum of nature is equal to the maximum of the I." In other words, the smallest sphere of consciousness is equal to the largest sphere of nature and vice versa.

Within an individual, their consciousness of the infinite is their *feeling of the sublime*. The latter is in quite a crude state in the individual. And *this feeling* is *enthusiasm*, which we earlier encountered as a factor of philosophy. The feeling of the sublime should therefore be elevated to the status of science.

The elements of philosophy are *consciousness* and the *infinite*. These are also the elements of all reality. Reality is the point of indifference between the two. It is only for consciousness that consciousness possesses reality outside of consciousness. Consciousness is necessary because I, by positing a possible consciousness, simultaneously posit an actual consciousness; and *whatever is actual in virtue of its possibility is necessary*. The infinite is something

¹³ *aufheben*.

¹⁴ *Transcriber's Note*: "Not-I = *x*" is the formula of all non-philosophy.

you cannot abstract from, period. For the infinite alone could annihilate the infinite. That is to say, therefore, that *the infinite possesses reality for consciousness*. The infinite is something that you can only purely and simply posit. *The sole object¹⁵ of consciousness is the infinite and the sole predicate of the infinite is consciousness*. Both elements form a closed sphere, in the middle of which lies reality. *A synthesis has to be thought up between the two extremes of consciousness and the infinite*. It is only through abstraction that we attain them and *the tendency of abstraction is synthetic*.

Out of this, we get the following result for our philosophy:

| 7

THEOREM I

ALL IS IN ONE AND ONE IS ALL.¹⁶

This is the principle of all ideas and the idea of all principles.

We came to this theorem by abstracting from everything that stands opposed to the absolute. That's why we posited the *infinite* purely and simply; simultaneously, however, we also had a *consciousness of the infinite*; and *this is what all philosophy emerges from*.

This phenomenon is something that we have to consider in more detail.

If we abstract from *knowing* and *willing* in human beings—and this is something we have to do because we are, first of all, searching for a type of

¹⁵ *Objekt*.

¹⁶ “All is in One and One is All” is Schlegel’s take on the Spinozist motto “Ἐν καὶ Πᾶν” (*Hen kai pân*, One and All). By invoking the latter, Schlegel is expressly contributing to the then-ongoing Pantheism Controversy (*Pantheismusstreit*), instigated by a conversation between Gotthold Ephraim Lessing—then perhaps *the* representative of the Enlightenment in Germany—and Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, during which the former reportedly declared: “*Hen kai pan!* I know of nothing else. [...] There is no other philosophy than the philosophy of Spinoza.” *Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza*, in *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, trans. George di Giovanni (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2009), 187; *Ueber die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (Brewslay: Gottl. Löwe, 1785), 12-13. In publishing his correspondence with Mendelssohn regarding Lessing’s confession, Jacobi used the conversation as cannon fodder in a war on the Enlightenment. According to Jacobi, Spinoza was the epitome of the Enlightenment because he was the most consistent of philosophers, something that he insinuated Lessing—who, again, was *the* representative of the Enlightenment in Germany—recognized in his confession. Spinoza, and Spinoza alone had, so Jacobi, the courage to take reason to its logical conclusion: a substance monism wherein everything that exists is a product of nature and its inexorable laws, leading, in turn, to determinism and atheism. Faced with this and its consequences for individual freedom and religion, Jacobi contended that faith over reason must be the basis of genuine knowledge, a position that was received as a form of fideism. In siding with Spinoza over Jacobi, Schlegel is implying that Spinozism does not equal determinism and atheism, even if he concedes that reason is not the be-all and end-all of philosophy. Speaking of logic, he says, after all, “the source of *truth* lies, for us, far higher.” See above *Transcendental Philosophy*, 3.

knowledge related thereto¹⁷—we discover something else, that is, *feelings* and *aspirations*. Our intention is to see whether we might be able to discover here something analogous to us being conscious of the infinite. To start with, let's take a look at *feelings*.

Were we to think past all the singular, many and various feelings, those that bring about changes in human life, we would still be left with *one feeling*. *That is the feeling of the sublime*, and in it we discover an analogy with the *consciousness of the infinite*.

Many have tried to explain this feeling;¹⁸ but that cannot be done. It is *the ultimate, the originary*, something that cannot be explained. It is what distinguishes the human being from animals. It does not lie in its subject matter. Its subject matter could be anything whatsoever. The feeling is *unique*; it is what is *originary* in the human being. It does not depend on culture. It is something that we also find, with the highest level of vitality, in the most uncivilized, crude people. It arises when all our singular and, in a manner of speaking, ordinary feelings are suddenly suspended. It is the same in the case of *acts of aspiring*. There is, among the many singular acts of aspiring that make human life be marked by variety and variation, one that stands out among them all, this being *striving toward an ideal*. This does not, however, emerge from nature, but rather merely from culture. Our intention was to seek the highest, something that, if we abstract from knowing and willing, may be discovered that would be analogous to being conscious of the infinite. We discovered the *feeling of the sublime* and *striving toward the ideal*. We must now climb up to even higher heights and see what kind of *common ultimate term* results from these two, which is something meditated between the two. This is *a longing, the yearning*¹⁹ *for the infinite*. There is nothing higher in the human being.

¹⁷ *ein Wissen dafür*.

¹⁸ *Transcriber's Note*: The feeling of the sublime needs no explanation. But all other feelings must be explained.

¹⁹ "Yearning" (*Sehnsucht*) is a quintessentially Romantic theme. It is a term of art, as it were, that is difficult to render in any language while capturing its unique polysemy. It is variously translated as "longing," "desire," and "yearning." It refers to an intense longing for something (which is the very definition of "yearning"), but an intense longing of a very specific kind: for something that may not be possible to attain or whose attainment is very uncertain. It is the subject of a poem of the same name by Friedrich Schiller as well as the poem "*Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt*" ("Only You Who Know Yearning Firsthand") by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe found in his novel *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. The latter gives a good feel for the word:

Only you who know yearning firsthand
 Know of what I suffer!
 Alone and severed
 From all joy,

The feeling of the sublime happens in a flash. It arises suddenly and likewise disappears. This is not the case with our yearning for the infinite. It is *sedate* and *eternal*. Yearning differs from the ideal in virtue of something undetermined residing in it. It is, purely and simply, not bound to one ideal; it does not stand still at any ideal. Striving for the ideal is *an entirely individual affair*.²⁰ An idea, that is, *a whole in relation to the individual, provides an ideal*. Were someone to have *a striving* toward the ideal, and were this *striving* bound up with *a yearning for the infinite*, then that person would have a *sense*, that is, *love for everything ideal*. Were, however, someone's *yearning for the infinite* bound up with the *feeling of the sublime*, then this person would always want to have this feeling and it is this state that one should call "education."

(What one usually understands by "education" is cultivation or refinement.²¹ One should really reserve "education" for when speaking of the state described just now.)

Some of Plato's texts—the *Phaedo* is a superb example—are well suited to the task of triggering the yearning for the infinite within us. There are also some newer pieces as well. Take, for instance, the text *Speeches on Religion*,²² the author^{23,24} of which has chosen to remain anonymous.

I look into the firmament
To the yonder side.

Alas! The one who loves and knows me well
Is in the distance.
It makes my head spin; it sets aflame
My insides.
Only those who know yearning firsthand
Know of what I suffer.

²⁰ *individuell*.

²¹ In his 1784 essay "Concerning the Question 'What is Enlightenment?'" Moses Mendelssohn, too, claims that education (*Bildung*) is more than cultivation (*Kultur*) and also draws a connection between cultivation and refinement (*Politur*): "Education can be divided into cultivation or enlightenment. The former seems more concerned with the practical: with being gracious, being posh, and the beauty to be found in the arts and crafts and social customs (its objective dimension); and with skill, diligence, and ingenuity in the former, and a liking, drive, and propensity to engage in the latter (its subjective dimension). [...] Enlightenment, on the other hand, seems to refer more to the theoretical. It refers to rational cognition (its objective dimension) and skill (its subjective dimension) in reflecting rationally upon the matters of human life according to the measure of their importance and their influence on the vocation of humankind. [...] Cultivation, in its superficial appearance, is what we call refinement." *Berlinische Monatsschrift* 4 (1784): 194-195.

²² *Transcriber's Note*: There's also a text by Baader.

²³ *Transcriber's Note*: Schleiermacher.

²⁴ See *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, ed. and trans. Richard Crouter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); *Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (1799), in *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Hans-Joachim Birkner et al., I / 2

The yearning for the infinite has to always be a yearning. It cannot occur in the form of intuition. The ideal can never be intuited. The ideal is generated through speculation.

We have made our way back to the theorem itself. It runs: “All is in One and One is All.”

This is a theorem because it is the core of all theory. This expresses all the results that we, while we were solving the second problem, discovered through experimenting.

Conclusions to be drawn from this theorem.

Four *axioms* follow from this theorem.

Axiom I: “Principles are the transition from error to truth.”²⁵

All reality is the product of opposing elements. (One can now have no qualms in claiming that natural science, no matter the heights to which it believes it can rise, will not be able to discover a higher point to draw on than *dualism*. This is the purest and most extreme illusion and hence the principle of poesy.)

Duality is the character of all principles as far as matter goes: now, since both primordial elements likewise consist of two elements, the form of the principles will be a *quadruplicity*.

Axiom II: “Reality is only in ideas.”

Identity is the character of ideas. Hence, they are only an *expression*, a symbol. Their form will be *triplicity*. (You may notice this intermittently: our *method has to begin with reduction*. That’s why a system cannot begin with the spirit, but rather it can only begin with the letter.²⁶)

Axiom III: “All knowledge is symbolic.”

This axiom immediately follows from the second. Ideas can only be expressed symbolically.

Axiom IV: “All truth is relative.”

(Berlin / Walter de Gruyter, 1980–), 185–326). For Schlegel’s review of the text, see “Reden über die Religion,” *Athenaeum* 2, no. 2 (1799): 289–300.

²⁵ *Transcriber’s Note:* Principles take, as their starting point, *phenomena*, the *finite*, the *determined*.

²⁶ Later on in the lectures, the transcript gives more detail on this point: “How does *method* differ from *system*? Method is the *spirit* and system is the *letter*. / System is the *organization of philosophy*, method *its inner life force*. [...] By ‘system,’ one means nothing more than the following: ‘It is a scientific whole that is complete in itself.’” *Transcendental Philosophy*, 18.

Because, namely, all truth, as the old adage goes, always lies somewhere in the middle. And this is because all reality lies in the middle. — Truth is a product of the conflict of illusion. It arises from the strife of homogeneous errors.

Objections.

But—one could certainly raise the objection anyway—is not *the infinite* itself, then, a *complete fabrication*? Is it not some kind of *error*, *illusion*, or *misunderstanding*?

To this objection, we would give the following reply: Yes, it is a *complete fabrication*. But it is a complete fabrication that is purely and simply necessary. Our I has the tendency to approach the infinite and it is only due to the fact that the I, in a manner of speaking, surges forward to approach the infinite that the thought of the infinite even occurs to us.

But *any error* is automatically cleared up, since we take as our starting point ourselves *qua* midpoint,²⁷ and also come back to it again. How can one be making an error here? What about *an illusion*? It also cannot be that; for the infinite is One—you therefore just cannot mistake it.

This leaves considerable room for it being some kind of misunderstanding. But misunderstanding still presupposes truth.

It is also not the case that the ultimate ground of knowledge is *faith*.²⁸ Faith only occurs in those situations where we cannot know, where the reality of what we think cannot enter consciousness.

The following propositions follow from the axioms that have been established: “Philosophy is infinite, intensively as well as extensively” and “How philosophy is divided up is arbitrary.”

| 10 So, for example, Fichte’s philosophy can be broken down *into four parts*:

- 1.) The Doctrine of Science (i.e., the *Wissenschaftslehre*) in contrast to
- 2.) Moral Philosophy;
- 3.) Philosophy of Religion and
- 4.) Natural Law, *qua* postulate of practical reason.

The general schema of Fichtean philosophy would accordingly be a □.

Spinoza only has, in his philosophy, unity. He begins with the infinite (God) and likewise also ends with it.

The general schema of his philosophy would be a ○.

²⁷ *Transcriber’s Note*: The midpoint of our *being*, not of *individuality*, but rather in the most expansive sphere of reason.

²⁸ See note 16 above.

To be sure, we also do indeed come across *unity* in ancient Greek philosophy; but their philosophy is never self-contained.²⁹ Rather, it is the case that the infinite is, again and again, hinted at. We will come across all these divisions in our schema.

From the propositions “Philosophy is infinite” and “How it is divided up is arbitrary,” it emerges that the most complete system can only be an *approximation*—not of the ideal of philosophy in general, but rather of each one’s own ideal. (This is reminiscent of the *spirit* and *letter* of a system.) Every system begins with *reduction* and *analysis*. Reduction is the resolution of a complex of phenomena into singular phenomena.

If philosophy is infinite, then knowledge is also infinite; and, accordingly, there is only *one type of knowledge*, philosophical knowledge.³⁰ All knowledge is philosophical. It is an indivisible whole.

Something else follows from these axioms: *the fact that even skepsis is eternal*, just like philosophy is. But not *skepsis* as a *system*, but rather insofar as it pertains to philosophy. The idea of philosophy is only achievable through an infinite progression of systems. Its form is that of a cycle.³¹

If you would like to know how a circle could be described in terms of two opposing elements, you may think of the matter roughly along these lines: the center of the circle is the positive factor, the radius the negative one, and the peripheral point the point of indifference. Now, the positive factor in the point of indifference has a striving to unite with the positive factor in the center; by force of the negative factor, however, it cannot approach the center, but rather is made to merely drift around the center. Now, *enthusiasm* is the *center* and *skepsis*, the *radius*.

Enthusiasm must be *absolute*—that is to say, it is not permitted to let it diminish or certainly not to let it vanish altogether. The radius can grow into infinity. This thus goes for the degree of consciousness, *skepsis*, as well; the more it grows, the bigger becomes the periphery, that is, philosophy.

Of philosophy one could say what the Italian poet said of *God*: “Philosophy is a circle whose center is everywhere and whose periphery is nowhere.”³²

²⁹ *geschlossen*.

³⁰ *Transcriber’s Note*: Philosophy considers the soul, the midpoint of all knowledge.

³¹ The German for “cycle” (*Kreislauf*) contains the German word for “circle” (*Kreis*). The smooth transition to the next paragraph, which is facilitated by the linguistic connection between the terms, is preserved with “cycle” if one bears in mind that the word etymologically derives from the Greek “κύκλος” (*kuklos*, circle).

³² It is unclear to whom Schlegel is referring. He could mean Dante’s 1294 *The New Life* (*La Vita Nuova*), where we read: “I began to address him, saying: ‘Lord of all virtues, why do you weep?’ And he said these words to me: *Ego tanquam centrum circuli, cui simili modo se habent*

What is valid of philosophy as a whole is also valid in each part of it.

Philosophy deals with our *consciousness of the infinite*; if it considers the latter *unconscious*,³³ then it descends into the *deepest depths*; if it, however, considers it *with consciousness*, then it ascends to the highest heights, which only the human mind and spirit is capable of reaching.

The tendency of philosophy is to move toward the absolute.

The following two articles for philosophy come about as a result of this:

1. "A yearning for the infinite should be developed in all human beings."
2. "The surface appearance³⁴ of the finite should be annihilated"; and in order for that to happen, *all knowledge has to be in a state of revolution*.

Consciousness has a history. The return of the determined into the undetermined contains or constitutes its *different epochs*.

circumferentie partes; tu autem non sic ["I am like the center of a circle, equidistant from all"]." *Dante's Vita Nuova*, translated by Mark Musa (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973) 17-18. Whatever the case, the exact reference is from the *Book of Twenty-Four Philosophers* (*Liber viginti quattuor philosophorum*), a medieval text whose author is unknown and which contains twenty-four different definitions of God. The second runs: "God is an infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere" (*Deus est sphaera infinita cuius centrum est ubique, circumferentia nusquam*). There is no published English edition and translation, but there is a German (as well as French and Italian) version. See *Was ist Gott? Das Buch der 24 Philosophen*, trans. Kurt Flasch (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2011).

³³ *bewußtlos*.

³⁴ *Schein*.