

Essays/Aufsätze

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Unpalatable Gods. Jacobi and the Controversies about the Divine in the ‘Sattelzeit der Moderne’

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Abstract: Der Beitrag diskutiert die Rezeption des Werks von Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi in den philosophischen und theologischen Debatten der sogenannten ‚Sattelzeit der Moderne‘. Vor dem Hintergrund von Jacobis Kritik am Gottesbegriff der rationalen Philosophie werden Johann Gottlieb Fichtes und Friedrich Schleiermachers Neubestimmungen von Religion und Gott thematisiert. Dabei zeigt sich, dass es in den Kontroversen über die göttlichen Dingen um die Sinngrundlagen einer sich modernisierenden Gesellschaft und Kultur geht.

Keywords: Philosophy of Religion, German Idealism, Modernity, Doctrine of God, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher

On February 4th, in the year 1795, the young Schelling wrote a letter in the Tübinger Stift to his former fellow student, Hegel, and gave him a report on his theological and philosophical studies. Schelling, just 20 years old and at the end of his theological studies, spoke in this letter about the theological situation in Tübingen, and he expressed astonishment about a question Hegel had raised concerning the range of the moral proof of the existence of God. Schelling hadn't expected such a question from an admirer of Lessing.

“But you”, as Schelling wrote further, “had only to ask whether the question is decided for me. For you [i. e. Hegel] the question has already been decided long ago. Also for both of us

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the orthodox concepts of God are no more. – My answer is: we have gone further yet in regard to a personal being. I have now become a Spinozist!”¹

‘Also for both of us the orthodox concepts of God are no more.’ – With this formulation the young Tübingen theologian takes up a formula from Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, which the latter had used in his book *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn*. In this book Jacobi reported a visit to him by that ‘lover of theology’ from Wolfenbüttel in the summer of 1780, so that the learned public could take part in the discussion between Jacobi and Lessing about Goethe’s poem “Prometheus”. As reported by Jacobi, after reading the poem Lessing had said: “The point of view from which the poem is treated is my own point of view [...] The orthodox concepts of the Divinity are no longer for me; I cannot stomach them. *Hen kai pan!* I know of nothing else.”²

Whatever the truth of Jacobi’s report about his discussion with Lessing may be, it is clear that at the end of the 18th century the traditional theological concept of God had become unpalatable for enlightened intellectuals. This is not only true for the librarian from Wolfenbüttel, but also for the young theologian from Tübingen who, after his reading of Jacobi’s book, began to use his expression about ‘unpalatable gods’. As a consequence of the modernization of culture and society in the 18th century (the transition from Old- to New-Protestantism, as Ernst Troeltsch called this development), the concept of God found in the traditional Lutheran theology, as well as the notion of God used within the Enlightenment rational school-philosophy, was no longer plausible. An extramundane being, who had created the world *ex-nihilo*, was no longer able to mediate the new view of nature, which was established in the modern era and which grew increasingly distant from the framework of the old *theologia naturalis*.

At the end of the 18th century and in the beginning of the 19th century, there were three famous controversies about God that reflected the loss of the plausibility of the old orthodox God: The first is the controversy about pantheism, the second is the controversy about atheism, and the last is the controversy about

¹ Letter Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling’s to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel on February 4th 1794. In Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *Briefwechsel 1786–1799*, hg. von Irmgard Möller, Walter Schieche, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, Historisch-kritische Ausgabe, Band III,1. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 2001, 20–23, here 22.

² Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, “Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Herr Moses Mendelssohn.” In Idem, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. and translated by George di Giovanni. Montréal, Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994, 173–251, here 187.

theism.³ The ‘Sattelzeit der Moderne’ is the name now given to this period of controversies about the concept of God, and the thesis of my paper is focused on this transitional period. I argue that not only was there a loss of plausibility of the traditional philosophical and theological doctrines of God during this period, but also there was an emerging struggle over the very foundations of meaning in an increasingly differentiated culture. In this manner these controversies about God are a paradigm for and expression of the emerging debates about the self-understanding of modernity. Jacobi was involved in all three controversies about God. The first and the last he started with his own writings. But his critique of Spinozism was not persuasive, as we can see from the letter of the young Schelling. Jacobi was rather an precursor for many reformulations of the now unpalatable and implausible notions of God.

My thesis is that the controversies about the divine around 1800 are controversies concerning the foundations of the interpretation of meaning in modern culture. In what follows, I shall explicate my thesis in further detail through the use of some examples. But I must restrict myself to the use of Fichte’s philosophy of religion during the period of the controversy about atheism, and to Schleiermacher’s famous speeches *On Religion*, which were published during the high tide of the controversy over Fichte. Both Fichte and Schleiermacher are working on alternatives to the crisis of theism, which was initially diagnosed by Jacobi. And for both, the now unpalatable notions of God were replaced with the concept of religion. However, we must start with Jacobi and his critique of a concept of God as the foundation of a system of knowledge. In the framework of this brief paper I can only refer to Kant *en passant*.

1 The God of Jacobi, or the Ghosts of Science

“A spectre of this system has been making the rounds in Germany for quite some time under all sort of shapes, and it is treated by both the superstitious and the infidel with equal reverence.”⁴ This quotation is not taken from the *Communist Manifesto*. It rather speaks about another specter, namely, that of Spinozism, and I am quoting from Jacobi’s *Letters to Moses Mendelssohn*, the famous Enlightenment philosopher from Berlin who was also a friend of Lessing. The so-called controversy about pantheism starts with the *Letters* from Jacobi

3 Cf. Georg Essen, Christian Danz (Eds.), *Philosophisch-theologische Streitsachen. Pantheismusstreit – Atheismusstreit – Theismusstreit*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2012.

4 Jacobi, “Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Herr Moses Mendelssohn”, 232 f.

to Mendelssohn about the Spinozism of Lessing, which soon unfolded into a larger debate about pantheism and its consequences. What was at stake in this controversy?

When Jacobi published a new edition of the *Letters* in his *Works* in 1819, he gave a later interpretation of this controversy with Mendelssohn. Jacobi wrote:

“My letters on the doctrine of Spinoza were not written to replace one system with another, but rather to show the insuperability (Unüberwindlichkeit) of Spinozism from the perspective of the logical use of the understanding (logischen Verstandesgebrauches): one can well see that there is no God once this science is followed to its conclusion. This science cannot be refuted through itself.”⁵

In regard to Jacobi’s critique of Spinozism, insofar as his later view is concerned, Jacobi mainly offers a fundamental alternative, namely the opposition between belief in God and the views of Spinozism. This alternative is already evident in the 1785 controversy with Mendelssohn, and it was this alternative to which Jacobi returned in all his later controversies. But exactly what does Jacobi have in mind by the conflict between belief in God and the ideas of Spinozism?

Let us begin with Spinozism. In his *Letters* Jacobi summarizes the debates about Spinoza throughout the 18th century with the thesis that the philosophy of Spinoza is the only system of philosophy of consequence.⁶ In other words: Spinozism is the system of reason par excellence because in such a system everything is conceptually interconnected. Systematic philosophy, if it has a true understanding of itself, must be a conceptually mediated system that is internally self-related. But (according to Jacobi) this is fatalism and atheism,⁷ because in such a system the conditioned is deduced from the absolute. The latter is not only the principle of the system, but rather the absolute is also always an element of the system, and this means a conditioned part.⁸ In such a system there is no freedom of the finite that is both concrete and the absolute. Therefore, Spinozism is fatalism and atheism. If this is true, then it is a contradiction to search for

5 Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Vorbericht der dritten Auflage (1819)*. In Idem, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Mendelssohn*, ed. Klaus Hammacher, Irmgard-Maria Piske. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000, 299–321, here 313.

6 Cf. Michael Murrmann-Kahl, “Pantheismusstreit.” In *Philosophisch-theologische Streitsachen. Pantheismusstreit – Atheismusstreit – Theismusstreit*, ed. Georg Essen, Christian Danz. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2012, 93–134.

7 Cf. Jacobi, “Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Herr Moses Mendelssohn”, 233: “Spinozism is atheism.”

8 Cf. Jacobi, “Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Herr Moses Mendelssohn”, 234: “Every avenue of demonstration ends up in fatalism.”

conditions of the absolute.⁹ All conditions for the unconditional destroy the latter, because they bring it to a “chain of *conditional conditions*”,¹⁰ a mechanism which transforms both the absolute and the finite. Therefore, the God of Spinoza, and hence the God of all subsequent philosophy which understands itself in terms of such a self-enclosed system is a ghost. But as Jacobi wrote fourteen years later, in his analysis of the controversy over atheism, not “a phantom of something, but *a phantom in itself*, a real nothingness, a nothingness of reality”.¹¹

Against the true philosophy of the system, namely the system of Spinoza, Jacobi put the true belief in God, the famous *salto mortale* for which Lessing found himself too old.¹² Already in the controversy with Mendelssohn in the 1780's, Jacobi declared the forerunner is better than the son of promise, the messiah of speculative reason.¹³ Furthermore, it must be noted that in regard to Jacobi's alternative to the system of reason, and along with its “fatal” consequences, that the Baptist from Königsberg is important. Jacobi agrees with Kant's critical restriction of the boundaries of knowledge, and also with his solution of the antinomy of freedom in the *Critique of pure Reason*.¹⁴ Constitutive for Jacobi's philosophy of belief are the famous words from the preface of the second edition of the *Critique of pure Reason*, which say that one must limit knowledge in order to have a place for belief. However, Jacobi's belief differs from Kant's belief presented within the *Critique of pure Reason*. In fact, Jacobi agrees with Kant's critical restriction of knowledge, but not with Kant's foundation of the transcendental aesthetic. Without a thing in itself (Ding an sich) which has a real impact on consciousness, the efficacy of an affection of the consciousness is not understandable. Therefore, the critical idealism of transcendental

9 Cf. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, “Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Moses Mendelssohn [Excerpts].” In Idem, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. and translated by George di Giovanni. Montréal, Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994, 339–378, here 376: “To want to discover the conditions of the unconditional; to want to *invent* a possibility for what is absolutely *necessary*, and to *construct* it in order to be able to comprehend it, seems on the face of it an absurd undertaking. Yet this is precisely what we undertake to do whenever we strive to make nature into something that we can comprehend, that is, reduce it to a *purely natural existence*, and uncover the mechanics of the principle of mechanism.”

10 Jacobi, “Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Moses Mendelssohn [Excerpts]”, 376.

11 Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Jacobi to Fichte*. In Idem, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. and translated by George di Giovanni. Montréal, Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994, 497–536, here 512.

12 Cf. Jacobi, “Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Herr Moses Mendelssohn”, 189.

13 Cf. Jacobi, *Jacobi to Fichte*, 503.

14 Cf. Ulrich Barth, “Pantheismusstreit, Atheismusstreit und Fichtes Konsequenzen.” In *Fichtes Entlassung. Der Atheismusstreit vor 200 Jahren*, ed. Klaus-Michael Kodall, Martin Ohst. Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1999, 101–123, here 104 f.

philosophy needs realism for a foundation. If this is lacking, then we have an appearance without anything that appears.¹⁵ From this consideration it follows for Jacobi that Kant's God is also a ghost. The God of Kant is, in theoretical philosophy, only a regulative idea, ineffective in face of the ghost of nihilism, and also standing on the shaky foundation of morality.

Jacobi's alternative to what he sees as the nihilistic consequences of Spinozism is a God who is not to be known. A grounding of the concrete world could only be a God who is himself without grounding. The knowledge of this God is not a type of ordinary discursive knowledge. Rather it rests on belief, and upon a feeling of unmediated inwardness.¹⁶

Belief versus knowledge, immediacy versus mediation – this is the alternative Jacobi brings into the debate with Mendelssohn, and into other contemporary controversies. Without the inward grasp of a God who is the free creator of the world, there is no meaning and no foundation for an understanding of meaning in the world. Instead the last word would be the causal mechanism of the mind, and all the meaning of both life and freedom would be gone. On this ground it must be in the interest of science and reason that God cannot be known. Saving God from conceptual thinking is the foundation of freedom for human beings.¹⁷ But also this God, which Jacobi finds to be quite palatable, is quite distinct from the Gods of both the theological tradition and the rational philosophy of the Enlightenment.

2 The necessity of God, or Fichte's atheism

"In his zeal, Jacobi often seems to confuse me with Mendelssohn or similar thinkers, who wanted to employ arguments in order to produce a religion within human beings."¹⁸ This quotation is taken from a letter Fichte wrote to Karl Leonhard Reinhold on January 8th, 1800. It expresses a view that relates to Jacobi's attitude in the controversy over Fichte's atheism. Fichte was shocked

¹⁵ Cf. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, "Ueber das Unternehmen des Criticismus die Vernunft zu Verstande zu bringen und der Philosophie überhaupt eine neue Absicht zu geben." In Idem, *Werke*, Band 3. Leipzig: Fleischer, 1816, 61–243, here 111. Cf. Barth, "Pantheismusstreit, Atheismusstreit und Fichtes Konsequenzen", 105.

¹⁶ Cf. Jacobi, "Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Herr Moses Mendelssohn", 242 f.

¹⁷ Cf. Jacobi, "Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Herr Moses Mendelssohn", 243.

¹⁸ Johann Gottlieb Fichte to Karl Leonhard Reinhold on January 8th 1800. In *Transzendentalphilosophie und Spekulation. Quellenband*, ed. Walter Jaeschke. Hamburg: Meiner, 1993, 65: "Jacobi scheint in seinem Eifer mich oft für Mendelssohn oder seines Gleichen anzusehen, die eine Religion in die Menschen hineinraisonniren wollten."

not only by Jacobi's understanding of Fichte's theory of religion, but also by his description of Fichte as the 'messiah of speculative reason'. The reason for this shock is that Fichte's philosophy of religion is explicitly opposed to the idea that it is possible to establish religion in humans by a process of rational reflection. Fichte's philosophy during the time of the controversy over atheism is a response to the crisis of theism at the end of the 18th century.¹⁹ For Lessing, Jacobi, and also Fichte, the traditional concepts of God were unpalatable. Moreover, the traditional concepts of God, as Fichte wrote in the second part of his *Appellation to the Audience*, were simultaneously an expression of atheism. Yet, why are the notions of God that are specified by Fichte's opponents atheistic?

Fichte's philosophy of religion (as developed in his short essay *Ueber den Grund unseres Glaubens an eine göttliche Weltregierung* [1798]) is a correction of the philosophy of religion offered by both Kant and Karl Friedrich Forberg. And it is also a further development of Fichte's own concept of religion. Already in his *Critique of all Revelation* we see Fichte offering an alternative connection between religion and morality to that proposed by Kant's application of pure practical reason.²⁰ In the essay from 1798 Fichte understood religion as an element of the moral self-consciousness. But the peculiarity of his position is, on the one hand, the result of a different connection to morality, and on the other hand Fichte proposes an alternative orientation to the final purpose (Endzweck) of the pure practical reason from that given by Kant. From this follows Fichte's thesis that the idea of God is a necessary element of the moral consciousness and not a subjective need, as Kant argued. In the status of morality (namely autonomy, which is the aim of activity), the demand of the final purpose is included. What does this mean for religion and its transcendental foundation in Fichte's philosophy of religion?

In the 1798 article about the ground of our belief in a divine world government, we read:

"Unless I want to disown my own essence, I must presuppose for myself the former; that is, the accomplishment of this goal. Accordingly, I must also assume the latter, namely, that this goal can be accomplished. Indeed, this is not actually a case of what comes first and what comes second, but rather of an absolute unity. In fact, here we have not two acts, but one and the same indivisible act of the mind."²¹

¹⁹ For Fichte's philosophy of religion during the time of the controversy about atheism cf. Christian Danz, "Der Atheismusstreit um Fichte." In *Philosophisch-theologische Streitsachen*, ed. Georg Essen, Christian Danz. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2012, 135–213.

²⁰ Cf. Danz, "Der Atheismusstreit um Fichte", 140–146.

²¹ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, "On the Basis of Our Belief in a Divine Governance of the World." In *idem, Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings (1797–1800)*, ed. and translated

Belief is related to the certainty of the practicability of the final purpose, and in this form belief is both a part of morality and yet also its own element in contrast to morality as such. Religion is on the one side a part of the moral consciousness, namely the certainty of the realization of the final purpose or the understanding of the self as autonomous in its acts, and on the other side religion is differentiated from morality. Fichte's concept of God – the moral world-order – takes up this connection between act and purpose, which couldn't be produced through the topic of action alone. In this sense God is a necessary and an immediate ingredient of the moral consciousness. By this, Fichte means, on the one hand, a presupposition of every moral act, namely the connection of all concrete acts in the realization of the final purpose, and on the other hand, that the idea of God as the moral world-order is a function for individualization.

Thus, for Fichte religion is an immediate part of the moral consciousness. Where morality is constituted, religion is also constituted. But if this is so, then it is impossible to bring religion into the human being from the outside. Transcendental philosophy does not offer a creation of religion, but rather offers a reconstruction of religion as an element constituting part of the structure of human consciousness. Fichte's God is a result of the transference of Kant's notion of God towards religion. The term 'God' describes for Fichte the evidence of the moral feeling in a structural way. Against this, every notion of God with regard to contents is a secondary reflection that is not essential or necessary. With this, Fichte makes a differentiation between God and religion, so that God is not necessary for religion.²² And because of this argument, and also because of his critique of the notion of the personality of God, Fichte's opponents declared that his philosophy was tantamount to atheism.

During the time of the controversy over atheism Fichte gave us in his philosophy of religion a transcendental foundation for religion. Religion is the way in which the moral character of certainty becomes conscious and represented in everyday life. The notion of God stands for the moral meaning of the world that is constituted for and by the individual in the moral act. Fichte's transfer of the accusation of atheism to his opponents in his *Appellation* has its ground in this notion.²³ The sensuous notion of the God of Fichte's opponents prevents

by Daniel Breazeale. Indianapolis, Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994, 142–154, here 148.

²² Cf. Fichte, "On the Basis of Our Belief in a Divine Governance of the World", 151: "This living and efficaciously acting moral order is itself God. We require no other God, nor can we grasp any other."

²³ Cf. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, "Appellation an das Publicum." In Idem, *Werke*, Volume 5. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971, 193–238.

the self-transparency of the human life.²⁴ Therefore, the true atheists are the opponents of Fichte, and not the philosopher from Jena.

The controversy about Fichte's God, as we have similarly seen in the controversy about the pantheism of Lessing, is actually a debate about the foundations of meaning in the emerging modern culture. To be sure, the rationalistic and sensuous God of Fichte's opponents within the controversy is not the God presented to us by Jacobi. Yet, Jacobi also rejects the transcendental-philosophical God of Fichte as a ghost and as an expression of a bottomless nihilism.

3 That "one religion without God can be better than another with God", or Schleiermacher's religion

"But lest you think I am afraid to say a proper word about divinity because it would be dangerous to speak about it before a judicially valid definition of God and existence has been brought to light and sanctioned in the German empire, [...] I shall try to make clear to you that for me divinity can be nothing other than a particular type of religious intuition."²⁵

Schleiermacher's point of view, as thus expressed in his speeches *On Religion*, is related to the controversy about Fichte's God and his so-called 'atheism'. Schleiermacher was working on his second speech in February 1799, just one month after the publication of Fichte's *Appellation to the Audience*, and while the controversy was still at its highest point. Schleiermacher agrees with Jacobi's diagnosis of the crisis of theism, and he also agrees with both Kant's and Fichte's critique of the metaphysical notion of God handed down to us through the philosophical and theological tradition. In short, the orthodox concepts of God were unpalatable to the young theologian and preacher at the hospital Charité. But the agreement with Jacobi's diagnosis doesn't mean that Schleiermacher also accepted the consequences drawn by Jacobi. To be sure, for him the concept of feeling is, just as for Jacobi, a central concept of his philosophy of religion. Like Fichte, as we have seen in the quotation above, Schleiermacher makes a differentiation between God and religion. In this move he follows Fichte's move in the atheism controversy, but not all the way. Schleiermacher rejects the foundation of religion in the moral consciousness which both Fichte and Kant had proposed. So what did Schleiermacher understand concerning the notion of religion, and what function does the idea of God have in his theory of religion?

²⁴ Cf. Folkart Wittekind, "Die 'Retorsion des Atheismus' – Der Atheismusstreit im Kontext von Fichtes früher Religionstheorie." In *Fichtes Entlassung. Der Atheismusstreit vor 200 Jahren*, ed. Klaus-Michael Kodalle, Martin Ohst. Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1999, 61–79, here 71.

²⁵ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion. Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, translated and ed. by Richard Crouter. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 135 f.

For Schleiermacher, religion is a reflexive consciousness in which the general is connected to the individual insofar as religion is concretely the individual realization of a generally valid self-consciousness, which is represented in symbolic forms. The religious consciousness is the concrete representation of the cosmic whole, or as Schleiermacher calls it, “the universe”.²⁶ This reflexivity distinguishes religion from thinking and acting, and makes religion a distinct province of consciousness. Schleiermacher also decoupled religious consciousness from both metaphysics and ethics. The essence of religion is intuition and feeling, whereupon in the first edition of the speeches the concept of intuition has a foundational role in the determination of religion.²⁷ What follows, is that religion is neither a moral code nor a creed, but the realization of a reflexivity which has taken place without an external reason in individuals. What is important is that in the religious act the intellectual life arises and finds its representation. Intuition and feeling are structural notions for describing the concrete peculiarity of religion, whereupon real religion is the immediate unity of intuition and feeling in the concrete consciousness. But this unity is not directly accessible to thought. What is accessible are only the symbolic forms and the feelings in which religion represents itself. Religion is therefore concretely valid, because it is an individual realization of a general consciousness, which is a structural element of every human consciousness.

Against this background, namely the foundation of religion in the structure of human consciousness, Schleiermacher criticizes the traditional concept of God. First, like Fichte, he dissolves the connection between religion and God. The concept of God is not a necessary part of the concept of religion.²⁸ Second, the imaginative idea of God is only a concrete religious kind of intuition.²⁹ Third, this means that Schleiermacher, like Fichte and against Jacobi, understood the concept of God as a secondary product of the imagination, which depends upon the direction of fantasy. God is not the foundation of religion; rather, on the contrary, the religious essence articulates itself with the concept of God to become a religion in the commonsense use of the term ‘religion’.³⁰

As we have seen in the diverse controversies about the unpalatable concepts of God around 1800, Schleiermacher works out a new determination of God as a

²⁶ Cf. Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 105.

²⁷ Cf. Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 104.

²⁸ Cf. Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 136.

²⁹ Cf. Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 136.

³⁰ Cf. Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 136: “To have religion means to intuit the universe, and the value of your religion depends upon the manner in which you intuit it, on the principle that you find in its actions.”

part of the religious consciousness. The imaginative picture of God is a symbol developed within a concrete religion from itself as religion. God means neither a metaphysical nor a cosmological explanation of the world, nor a foundation of moral action, but rather 'God' denominates religion as its own sphere in culture. In his speeches *On Religion* Schleiermacher gives us at the same time a foundation for the autonomy and universal validity of religion. But more importantly, Schleiermacher sees religion, as a reflexive act of self-understanding, as the basis of modern culture, which is characterized through differentiations. To have created the idea of such a reflexive self-interpretation is the aim of his speeches from 1799, written at the same time as the high point of the debates about the God of Fichte.

Schelling, as mentioned above, was also unable to stomach the traditional notions of God, though initially he was not charmed by Schleiermacher's speeches. Nevertheless Schleiermacher's understanding of religion, which connects the general with the individual, eventually made a great impression on Schelling. His philosophy of identity, which was worked out around 1800, and which also was a contribution to the debate about unpalatable Gods, has its center in a symbolic connection between the individual and the general, much as Schleiermacher had argued. But to explain this would require yet another lecture.³¹

³¹ I express my thank to Joshua Ramos (Denver) and Charles Fox (Williamstown) for their help with the translation.