

LANGUAGE AFTER PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE: SCHELLING'S GEOLOGY OF DIVINE NAMES

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Each mineral is a real philological problem.¹

Future commentary on Dante belongs to the natural sciences... No one has yet approached Dante with a geologist's hammer, in order to ascertain the crystalline structure of his rock, in order to study the particles of other minerals in it, to study its smoky colour, its garish patterning, to judge it as a mineral crystal which has been subjected to the most varied series of accidents.²

What happens to language after the post-linguistic turn?

In what does a speculative approach to religion consist?

Such are the two questions around which this essay is structured. It is not my purpose to give a comprehensive answer to either question; rather, I am concerned with one very specific approach that could be taken, and this is the approach of F.W.J. Schelling. Schelling has never been so relevant, and this is in no small part thanks to Iain Hamilton Grant's *Philosophies of Nature after Schelling*. Grant's work—part of the recent resurgence in speculative philosophies—has been instrumental in presenting Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* as a viable pursuit for philosophy in the wake of Deleuze. This chapter is intended as a “regional application” of Grant's presentation of Schelling onto philosophy of language and religion. It is important to stress straight-off that, while language and the numinous may well be two of the deconstructionist's favourite tools for undermining theoretical discourse, this chapter has no such aim. This chapter is and remains an exercise in filling in the gaps.

Much could be written about religion in Schelling's corpus, and even about its role in Grant's interpretation of it. I am interested, however, in providing an account which answers both of the above questions simultaneously. In order to do so, I will begin by pursuing the question of language, and only towards the end of the paper link it up with considerations of religion. The dual answer, I will conclude, is to be found in Schelling's *The Deities of Samothrace* which identifies etymological enquiry into divine names with geological excavation.

1. Testing the Extensivity of Speculative Philosophy

The past few years have witnessed a marked speculative turn in Continental philosophy—not only through the gradual appropriation of Deleuze and Badiou by the philosophical mainstream, but also through a number of post-Deleuze/Badiou

¹ F.W.J. Schelling, *Werke* vol. 5, ed. K.F.A. Schelling (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856-61), 247; F.W.J. Schelling, *On University Studies*, trans. E.S. Morgan and ed. Norbert Guterman (Athens: Ohio UP, 1966), 40.

² Osip Mandelstam, “Conversation about Dante” in *Selected Poems*, trans. Clarence Brown and W.S. Merwin (New York: New York Review, 1973), 119, 128.

philosophical experiments which have labelled themselves “speculative”. While to call these common experiments in speculative philosophy a “movement” may well be both premature and reductive, it seems undeniable that they exemplify a new impetus in Continental thought. Iain Hamilton Grant has been one of the foremost pioneers of this new-found speculative bent. His reading of Schelling has become a key reference point for thinking through what a re-injection of the speculative into philosophy would look like. It is Grant’s Schelling, of course, with whom this chapter is primarily concerned; however, before turning to Grant’s project in detail, it is worth considering the collective “speculative vision”—especially on the topics of language and religion.

Like all new philosophical movements, recent speculative thought has constructed its own genealogy. Kant is here the central figure, and his centrality is ensured by means of a double gesture. On the one hand, all philosophy since 1780 is dependent upon and determined by Kant’s (dis)solution of the problems of the philosophical tradition, but, on the other hand, this (dis)solution is seen as “more or less exhausted” and urgently in need of surpassing.³ The task of speculation is to overcome the questions of access and representation which Kant bequeathed to philosophy, to rediscover, in Meillassoux’s words, “the *great outdoors*, the *absolute* outside of pre-critical thinkers.”⁴

Recent speculative experiments have also attained self-identity by defining themselves against many of the trends of twentieth century philosophy (which, it is claimed, were still in thrall to the post-Kantian settlement). In no respect is this more evident than in their negative attitude to “the linguistic turn” and “the theological turn”. This critical attitude is most virulent with respect to language. The linguistic turn at the beginning of the twentieth century is the most extreme manifestation of the Kantian (dis)solution of the problems of the philosophical tradition. Language is another form the problem of our access to the world assumes. Meillassoux in this regard quotes Francis Wolff, “We are locked up in language... without being able to get out... We are in consciousness or language as in a transparent cage. Everything is outside, yet it is impossible to get out.”⁵ In a similar way, Harman speaks of “this ghetto of human discourse and language and power” to which philosophy has confined itself “for the past two hundred and twenty years.”⁶ Analytic philosophy of language and post-structuralism both fall afoul of speculation’s criticisms. They turned their attention away from “the great outdoors”, to obsess over how language gets (or, more accurately, fails to get) us there.⁷

³ See Harman in Brassier *et al*, “Speculative Realism,” *Collapse* III (2007), 368. Grant, it must be said, has a more ambivalent relation to Kant than Harman. See Grant in Brassier *et al*, “Speculative Realism”, 348-50 (in answer to a question concerning Schelling’s relation to Kant).

⁴ Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier (London: Continuum, 2008), 7. Similar diagnoses can be found in Harman’s attack on the dominance of the subject-object relation in post-Kantian thought and Grant’s critique of representation. Graham Harman, “On Vicarious Causation”, *Collapse* II (2007), 172-3 and Iain Hamilton Grant, “Schellingianism and Postmodernity: Towards a Materialist *Naturphilosophie*”, paper presented to the Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy in Boston, MA, 10th August 1998. Available at: www.bu.edu/wcp/papers/cult/cultgran.htm. Accessed 01/11/2009.

⁵ Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 6.

⁶ Harman in Brassier *et al*, “Speculative Realism”, 381. Thus, Harman writes elsewhere (with Bryant and Srnicek), in the twentieth century, “The mediation of language becomes all-encompassing as the phenomenal realm of subjectivity becomes irreducibly intertwined with linguistic marks. Again, any possibility of a world independent of the human-world correlation is rejected.” It is for this reason they respond, “We propose [the term] ‘speculative turn’ as a counterpoint to the formerly dominant ‘linguistic turn’.” (Levi Bryant, Graham Harman and Nick Srnicek, “Towards a Speculative Philosophy” in Bryant, Srnicek and Harman eds, *The Speculative Turn: Continental Realism and Materialism* (Melbourne: re.press, forthcoming).)

⁷ Badiou’s “Philosophy and Mathematics” is, in this regard, the foundational text for subsequent speculative philosophy. Badiou decries “the sophisticated tyranny of language” that has ruled over Western philosophy since

In *Philosophies of Nature After Schelling*, Grant makes similar criticisms of the linguistic turn. For example, Heidegger is upbraided because, in his thought, “language... supplants nature as the substrate in which beings adhere.”⁸ And, more generally, Grant attacks “the linguistic idealism that represents ‘nature’ as determined solely in and for language.”⁹ The turn to language in twentieth century philosophy has been, according to Grant, largely a forgetting of nature and the possibilities of *Naturphilosophie*—and it is such possibilities that he wishes to resuscitate (as we shall soon see). It is for reasons such as these that recent speculative philosophy has situated itself on the other side of a post- or anti-linguistic turn, a turn away from the obsessions with language that dominated so much twentieth century philosophy.

Similar things can be said about speculation and religion. There is widespread suspicion about the “theological turn in Continental philosophy.”¹⁰ Such tendencies are extensively critiqued by Meillassoux in *After Finitude* under the label of “fideism”: “The end of metaphysics,” he claims, “has taken the form of an exacerbated return of the religious.”¹¹ Post-Kantian philosophy of religion is condemned to a fideism which renounces philosophy’s rights, in order to open the field to theology.

Such, therefore, is a brief survey of speculative positions on religion and language. Much could, of course, be criticised in these somewhat simplistic and rather sweeping comments and, if one were so inclined, one could simply point out that speculation may well be subject to the same vicissitudes of signification as any other philosophy. However, this is not my intention here. Rather, I will assume in what follows the cogency of the speculative position (which, after all, has its attractive elements). My method of proceeding will be as follows: given these positions, I will explore how far they are compatible with one of Grant’s own criteria for philosophy—“the extensity test”.

“Every philosophical construction,” Grant states, “undergoes the test of the *extensity* of its concepts.”¹² Elsewhere he elaborates as follows,

[Philosophy] is ‘the infinite science’, and cannot therefore be ‘conditioned’ by eliminating anything a priori from its remit... The infinite science must test itself against the All, which lacks neither nature nor Idea. It is the *extensity* therefore, the *range* and *capacity* of philosophical systems that is being tested... [Schelling] challenges systems to reveal what they eliminate. Insofar as philosophy still leaves nature to the sciences, it continues to fail Schelling’s test, and becomes a conditioned, that is, a compromised antiphysics.¹³

My contention is that speculation’s negative attitude toward language and religion raises this very question which Grant himself poses to the rest of post-Kantian philosophy. This test of the “extensity of philosophical systems” needs to be turned back on Grant himself. We must challenge Grant (and speculative thought in general) as to whether his philosophical enterprise eliminates language and religion, and so here displays its blind spot. An attempt to construct Grant’s answer to such testing will form the basis of the rest of this essay. *Do speculative philosophies in general*

Hegel. Alain Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, ed. and trans. Ray Brassier and Alberto Toscano (London: Continuum, 2004), 38.

⁸ Iain Hamilton Grant, *Philosophies of Nature After Schelling* (London: Continuum, 2006), 6.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁰ Again, Badiou’s “Philosophy and Mathematics” provides a crucial precedent.

¹¹ Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 45.

¹² Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 194.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 19-21. Grant is here quoting from Schelling, *Werke*, 2:56.

and Grant's philosophy of nature in particular have the range and capacity to provide an adequate account of language and religion?

Let us pause a moment over what this means—taking language as our example. The problem is that language has been seen during the twentieth century as a barrier to speculation, as something which stands between thought and being. The play of signifiers bars us from the signified. My question, however, is the following: can language (and also religion) become *an object of speculation*? What happens when we treat language as one object among others? This, of course, requires bracketing off “the play of signifiers”, the disruptive elements of language generally and even the very fact that philosophy is propagated in a linguistic medium. However, such bracketing may well be worth the effort if it were possible, through this act, to conceive of a speculative linguistics in parallel to a speculative physics. In other words, the question is: can language be transformed from the universal medium in which philosophy takes place into a regional object on which philosophy speculates?

2. The Resurrection of *Naturphilosophie*

In order to answer these questions, it is first necessary to give an initial sketch of Grant's project and his reading of Schelling, so as to be able to sound out its “extensive value”.

The project is best summed up by the opening of Grant's contribution to the first “speculative realist” workshop: “The basic thing I want to talk about is the philosophical problem of nature, and I think this is a springboard for speculation—not opportunistically, but necessarily”¹⁴; moreover, according to Grant, by far the most significant speculative resolution of the problem of nature was provided by F.W.J. Schelling. Schelling's insistence on “the eternal and necessary bond between philosophy and physics”¹⁵, Grant maintains, is a timeless alternative for philosophy, one that puts it back in touch with its speculative roots. “Schellingianism is resurgent every time *philosophy reaches beyond the Kant-inspired critique of metaphysics, its subjectivist-epistemological transcendentalism, and its isolation of physics from metaphysics.*”¹⁶

Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, therefore, is to be opposed to much of the philosophical tradition. In fact, even Badiou (darling of much speculative thought)¹⁷ and Deleuze (Grant's preferred contemporary philosopher)¹⁸ fall short of it. They—along with the rest of post-Cartesian philosophy—manifest the tendency to *philosophical antiphysics*, Schelling's *bête-noire*. “The whole of modern philosophy since its inception (through Descartes),” Schelling famously writes, “has this common deficiency—that nature does not exist for it.”¹⁹

¹⁴ Grant in Brassier *et al*, “Speculative Realism”, 334.

¹⁵ Schelling, *Werke*, 7:101; Iain Hamilton Grant, “The ‘Eternal and Necessary Bond Between Philosophy and Physics’: A Repetition of the Difference Between the Fichtean and Schellingian Systems of Philosophy”, *Angelaki* 10.1 (2005), 54. As my concern in this section is with Grant's Schelling: as well as citing the German, I will cite Grant's translation of it (where available) as opposed to other English translations. Where no English citation is given, translations are my own.

¹⁶ Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 5.

¹⁷ See Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 8-9 and Iain Hamilton Grant, “‘Philosophy Become Genetic’: The Physics of the World Soul” in Norman Judith and Alistair Welchman eds, *The New Schelling* (London: Continuum, 2004), 129.

¹⁸ See especially Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 190-7.

¹⁹ Schelling *Werke* 7:356; F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom*, trans. James Gutmann (La Salle: Open Court, 1936), 30.

This forgetting of nature is exemplified most clearly in Schelling's immediate forebear, Fichte. Time and again, Schelling attacks Fichte for eliminating nature from philosophy, or, what is the same thing, for treating nature from a merely ethical perspective. To take merely one example of Schelling's criticism,

[Fichtean philosophy] consists of nothing but a moralizing of the entire world that undermines life and hollows it out; a true disgust towards all nature and vitality except that in the subject, and a crude extolling of morality and the doctrine of morals as *the one reality in life and science*.²⁰

In such condemnations, Schelling depicts Fichtean "nature-cide"²¹ to be a result of the "ethical process" in which philosophy is entrapped. This ethical process is that by which philosophy instantiates the primacy of practical reason at the expense of a speculative approach to nature: "the substitution of ethics for ontology".²² For both Grant and Schelling, this ethicisation of nature is "as untenable as it is ubiquitous".²³ And it is precisely against it that both their philosophical enterprises are directed.

There are two specific symptoms of nature's elimination and the triumph of the ethical that Grant observes in modern philosophy. The first is the sharp distinction therein between organic and inorganic nature. When in the third *Critique* Kant makes organisms the key to reflective judgment, he in effect draws a boundary between the organic as philosophically significant and the inorganic as philosophically insignificant. Nature is limited to life—and that which subsists below this threshold of animation is ignored.²⁴ Biology is of interest to philosophy, but geology is not.

The second symptom of the post-Cartesian forgetting of nature is its phenomenalism, and consequently its somatism (i.e. its reduction of the natural world to a series of bodies). That is, modern philosophy limits nature to what can be experienced, and thus to a theory of bodies.²⁵ This is a product of philosophy's indolence with respect to nature, its disinclination to go beyond the given and uncover its conditions. Indeed, when it comes to nature, Kant and Fichte (for example) were *not transcendental enough*—accepting phenomenal experience without considering its physical conditions. Philosophy has only been interested in natural phenomena (not productive nature) and, as such, cannot get at what exceeds such phenomena (either the infinitesimally small or the "arche-fossil"²⁶ or cosmological temporality).

What, then, does a speculative *Naturphilosophie* freed from "the ethical process" look like? The basis of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, Grant claims, is his rejection of somatism in favour of dynamics: "Forces before bodies."²⁷ Central to this change in

²⁰ Schelling, *Werke*, 7:19; Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 61.

²¹ Grant, "The Eternal and Necessary Bond", 45.

²² Iain Hamilton Grant, "Being and Slime: The Mathematics of Protoplasm in Lorenz Oken's 'Physio-Philosophy'", *Collapse IV* (2008), 288-9. Kant's third *Critique* is the paradigm instance of this. It manifests "the fatal decay of modern European *Wissenschaft* from *physis* to the ethico-teleological." (Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 104)

²³ Grant, "Being and Slime", 289.

²⁴ "Postkantian philosophy has repeatedly reverted to organism, to the phenomena of *life*, precisely to head off naturephilosophical incursions. In other words, inherent in the problem of organism... is a *two-worlds physics*. Life acts as an Orphic guardian for philosophy's descent into the physical." (Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 10)

²⁵ In fact, Grant traces this view all the way back to Aristotle, who, he claims, perverts Platonic physics by transforming it into a science of bodies. Grant reads Schelling's Platonism precisely as an attempt to overthrow this Aristotelian perversion (Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 54).

²⁶ The "arche-fossil" is Meillassoux' label for that which precedes all possible experience. See Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 9-10.

²⁷ Grant, "Physics of the World Soul", 137.

perspective is a tireless concern with *how the phenomenal is generated*; it is this which is of interest, *not* phenomenal bodies themselves.

This change in focus from somatics to dynamics requires the philosopher to go beyond what is phenomenally apparent and discover that which exists below the threshold of the given. In passing beyond the phenomenal, *Naturphilosophie* is, therefore, able to treat everything which cannot be contained within our human powers of representing. Significantly for our purposes, Schelling's non-phenomenological physics is thus able to examine geological and cosmological time-spans, that is, the durations which give birth to fossils and to new species. Such periods are inaccessible to the individual human's capacity of imagination; they are, in Kantian language, sublime. Yet, in moving beyond the phenomenal, Schelling is able to begin to think about "the timescales involved in natural becomings [which] exceed the phenomenological capacity not only of individuals, but also of any and all species."²⁸ Such is Schelling's point when he notes,

The alterations to which organic as well as inorganic nature are subjected may have happened in *far greater periods of time than our lesser time periods can provide a measure for*, and that are so great that until now no such experience has been lived through.²⁹

At the heart of Schelling's new dynamics of nature lies the concept of "non-linear recapitulation". It is Carl Friedrich Kielmeyer's initial exposition of this notion in his 1793 *On the Proportions of Organic Forces throughout the Series of Organisations* that leads Schelling to exclaim that "a new epoch in natural history" has begun.³⁰ Basically put, non-linear recapitulation denotes the process by which the productive forces which constitute nature repeat themselves in ever higher potencies *ad infinitum* (i.e. without a teleological endpoint).³¹ The same forces recur incessantly and it is the job of the philosopher of nature "to plot their recursion and mutation throughout each and every branch of the system of nature."³² Such a theory of the self-recapitulation of forces is *non-linear*, because, unlike linear recapitulation, it does not posit one body (namely, the human) as the end-point of the mutation, as the point where the forces perfect themselves.³³ Instead, non-linear recapitulation is in principle *endless*: the same proportion of forces can recur in ever higher potencies *ad infinitum*.

Because it is exactly the same forces that recapitulate in producing different bodies, there is *no gulf* between the organic and inorganic for Schelling and Kielmeyer. What is more, nature does not just extend into the geological and inorganic, but also into the mental realm. Grant insists that *Naturphilosophie* should be able to explain ideas as well. It is for this reason he comes up with the extensity test considered in the previous section: *Naturphilosophie* to really count as the "physics of the All" must be able to give an account of ideogenesis (otherwise it would be conditioned by something it excluded). It needs to provide "a dynamics... of the concept".³⁴

²⁸ Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 127.

²⁹ Schelling, *Werke*, 2:349; Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 139.

³⁰ Schelling *Werke*, 2:565; Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 110.

³¹ Grant quotes extensively from Kielmeyer to this effect in *Philosophies of Nature*, 129.

³² Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 119.

³³ *Linear* recapitulation is a theory of the analogous relation between different *bodies* (a microcosm/macrocosm relation). It establishes a "hierarchy" of beings with man at the top. Grant thus speaks of "the ethico-teleological project of the linear recapitulationists" (Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 131) and its "somatic-phenomenal" basis (*ibid*, 131).

³⁴ Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 21.

It is non-linear recapitulation which achieves just such a one-world physics. The proportion of forces that produce real phenomena repeats itself in all that exists, and so recurs in ideal phenomena too. Schelling's is "an uninterrupted physicalism leading from 'the real to the ideal'".³⁵ In Schelling's words, the task for a *Naturphilosophie* that intends to become "absolute" is to trace "a natural history of our mind"³⁶—"to pursue the dynamic process from nature to ideation."³⁷

Such "a non-somatic and non-phenomenal dynamic *physis* of ideation"³⁸ is possible, according to Schelling, on the premise that the transcendental conditions of experience are located in the dynamic interaction of forces, rather than the play of faculties. *Naturphilosophie*, in Schelling's words, "materialises the laws of intelligence into laws of nature."³⁹ It follows the self-recapitulation of nature into thought, and realises that intelligence "is a simple consequence of nature's incessant potentiation".⁴⁰ Consciousness, therefore, becomes, *pace Kant*, a regional phenomenon, one more object among other objects (to use Harman's language).

Such, therefore, is Grant's Schelling: a Schelling who rejects the somatism and phenomenism of more dominant strands of philosophy by looking to the empirically inaccessible forces which generate the phenomenal world; a Schelling who—through the concept of non-linear recapitulation—provides a dynamics which includes both the idea and the geological. Schelling's philosophy is, Grant claims, a speculative physics which, as absolute, excludes nothing from its purview—from the oldest rock to the newest idea.

Does it, however, include language and religion? Such is the question to which I now turn. I am interested in discovering the way in which Grant's Schelling could make room for a speculative account of these two fields in his absolute philosophy. In order to anticipate an answer, it is worth reconsidering the manner in which Grant absorbs ideas and ethics into this absolute philosophy. This will provide a preliminary clue to how we should expect language and religion to be so incorporated. Grant (following Schelling) attacks the "idealist" and "practacist" orientations which dominate philosophy and eliminate nature; however, his attitude towards them is not merely critical, since—having reinstated a speculative viewpoint on nature—Grant returns to the topics of ideas and ethics to show how they, in fact, are regional manifestations of nature itself. For Fichte, theory of consciousness is the whole of philosophy and "it is only...in [one] small region of consciousness that there lies a world of the senses: nature"⁴¹; for Schelling, the exact reverse is true.⁴² The ideal realm is *downgraded* from its position as determining the whole of a philosophy of consciousness (through its privileged relation to the subject) to a mere *regional object of philosophy of nature*. Schelling, that is, inverts Kant and Fichte's "idea of nature"

³⁵ Ibid, 11 (quoting Schelling, *Werke*, 3:272-3). Grant puts it elsewhere as follows, "Nature thinks just as nature 'mountains' or nature 'rivers' or nature 'planetises', or what have you. These things are the same to all intents and purposes." (Grant in Brassier *et al*, "Speculative Realism", 344)

³⁶ Schelling, *Werke*, 2:39; Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 45.

³⁷ Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 172.

³⁸ Ibid, 113.

³⁹ Schelling *Werke*, 3:352; Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 29.

⁴⁰ Schelling, *Werke*, 4:76; Grant, "The Eternal and Necessary Bond", 48.

⁴¹ J.G. Fichte, "Letter to Schelling, 31/05/1801" in F.W.J. Schelling, *Briefe und Dokumente* vol. II, ed. Horst Fuhrmans (Bonn: Grundmann, 1973), 343; translated in "Selections from Fichte-Schelling Correspondence (1800-1801)" in Jochen Schulte-Sasse *et al* ed, *Theory as Practice: A Critical Anthology of Early German Romantic Writings* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 83.

⁴² Hence, he replies to Fichte, "I know sufficiently well in what small region of consciousness you have to situate nature, due to the concept you have of it. It has for you absolutely no speculative significance, but only a teleological significance." "Letter to Fichte, 03/10/1801" in Schelling, *Briefe* vol. 2, 354.

into a “physics of the idea”. Nature, not consciousness, becomes the subject of philosophy. This *regionalisation* is, what I will dub, *the speculative process*: whereas “the ethical process” is that by which ethics supplants nature, “the speculative process” reverses this, supplanting ethics with a speculative philosophy of nature, one regional object of which is ethics. It is such a process that I will attempt to locate in *Naturphilosophie*’s attitudes to language and religion.

3. Fichte’s Ethical Dissolution of Language

I will begin with language, for—as we shall discover—it is by pursuing the speculative attitude to language that we will end up discovering the appropriate speculative attitude to religion. My procedure will be to return to Schelling himself to uncover any answer (or intimations of an answer) which he may have given as to the role of language (and religion) in *Naturphilosophie* and, in consequence, which can be incorporated into Grant’s account. However, as Hennigfeld points out, language is not a particularly popular topic for Schelling: “There is no elaborate philosophy of language in Schelling’s corpus; there are, however, a few significant indications of isolated beginnings of a philosophy of language.”⁴³ It is two such “isolated beginnings” on which I will concentrate in what follows and, through them, I hope to reconstruct Schelling’s speculative linguistics.

However, before turning to the first of these “isolated beginnings”, it is worth pausing for a moment over Fichte’s theory of language. This is because, *in exact parallel to the reduction of nature to ethics that Grant and Schelling attack in Fichte’s writings, a reduction of language to the ethical can also be discerned therein*. Language too is subject to the ethical process and, through it, becomes a tool of intersubjective interaction.

Fichte’s essay on the subject (“On the Linguistic Capacity and the Origin of Language”) is an attempt to chart “the ‘genesis’ of language transcendently considered.”⁴⁴ As with all Fichte’s forays into transcendental philosophy, the task is therefore to exhibit *the primacy of the practical* in this field of philosophy enquiry. Language, Fichte claims, enables a relationship between subject and subject that can acknowledge the pre-existing spontaneity of each party. Through language, “an interchange between freedom and purposiveness is revealed.”⁴⁵ Language is the means by which we recognise the purpose spontaneously formed by the other—we realise the other is already ethical too:

I wish that the other might know my intention so that he would not act against me and, for the same reason, I wish to know the intentions of the other. Thus arises the task of inventing fixed signs by which we can communicate our thoughts to others.⁴⁶

⁴³ Jochem Hennigfeld, “Schellings Philosophie der Sprache”, *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 91.1 (1984), 16. My translation.

⁴⁴ Jere Paul Surber, *Language and German Idealism: Fichte’s Linguistic Philosophy* (New Jersey: Humanities, 1996), 28.

⁴⁵ J.G. Fichte, “On the Linguistic Capacity and the Origin of Language”, trans. J.P. Surber in Surber, *Language and German Idealism*, 123.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 124.

Fichte writes elsewhere even more explicitly, “The character of the sign is [an] eliciting of freedom by freedom... a summons to free activity through the influence of a rational being.”⁴⁷ Language is a product of intersubjective, ethical relations.

The Fichtean account of language is, then, a *pragmatic* account—a reduction of language to the ethical. Language is subjected to the “ethical process” just as nature is elsewhere in Fichte’s corpus.

The question therefore becomes even more insistent: does Schelling respond to the Fichtean ethicisation of language as he responds to his ethicisation of nature? Is there a speculative rebuttal of such an elimination of language which parallels his *Naturphilosophie*’s rejection of Fichtean “nature-cide”?

4. Schelling’s Speculative Linguistics

One intimation of a response is to be found in Schelling’s 1811 speech to the Munich Academy, *Bericht über den pasigraphischen Versuch des Professor Schmid in Dilligen*. In the *Bericht*, Schelling is intent on incorporating philosophy of language into *Naturphilosophie*. The first suggestion that this is specifically what he intends can be discerned from the following,

One may ask whether there are not... homologous language formations like there are mountain formations that can recur in quite different places in the world independently of each other.⁴⁸

Can words, Schelling asks, be thought of as physical phenomena, produced by dynamic forces analogous to those which generate other natural phenomena (like mountains)? That is, is a physics of language possible?

Later in the *Bericht*, Schelling goes even further,

When one cognises the physical in language, and pursues and arranges the facts of the history of peoples and language in connection or at least in analogy to the geological, what wondrous and (at present) unbelievable regularity and lawfulness will then appear before our eyes!⁴⁹

This quotation is crucial, and I will return to it repeatedly in what follows. First, Schelling insists on the need to “cognise the physical in language.” This is a remarkable recommendation and one that can be flatly opposed to Fichte’s reduction of the linguistic to intersubjective communication. Language, Schelling implies, is a natural object like any other: it is constituted from natural forces and can be absorbed into a naturephilosophical account of reality. Just as Schelling conceived of a dynamics inclusive of the idea, so too here he suggests the need for a dynamics that takes account of the word. By “cognising the physical in language”, words become objects of a speculative physics, the appropriate subject-matter of *Naturphilosophie*.

Second, Schelling advocates understanding the history of language “in connection or at least in analogy to the geological”. This is key to my present purposes. Here, Schelling goes beyond his own initial comparison with mountain formations: language should not be merely thought of “*in analogy*” to geological phenomena, but—more than that—“*in connection*” with them. This connection goes beyond a

⁴⁷ J.G. Fichte, “Lecture Notes on Platner’s *Aphorisms*”, trans. J.P. Surber, in Surber, *Language and German Idealism*, 156-8.

⁴⁸ Schelling, *Werke*, 8:453.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 8:453.

merely regulative metaphorical relation to a determinative, ontological one. Schelling transcends his initial cautious separation of the linguistic from the geological, so as to discover their common ground. *The geo-logical supercedes the ana-logical.*

Schelling's comments here are consistent with Grant's insistence on the "more than analogical" relation between disparate realms in Schelling's work. Deleuze writes, for example, in imitation of Schelling, "Depth is like the famous geological line from NE to SW, the line which comes diagonally from the heart of things and distributes volcanoes."⁵⁰ Grant dubs such mimicry a failure, however: Schelling is "as different from the Deleuzian as from the Kantian."⁵¹ This is all down to the "like" which appears—this is not Schellingian, but rather Kantian. Deleuze follows Kant in building a merely *analogical* bridge between nature and thought, physics and metaphysics (and by extension, geology and linguistics). Schelling's bridge, on the contrary, is built of stone! Deleuze remains in thrall here to a logic of representation, whereas Schelling is more Deleuzian than Deleuze. For Schelling, "the likeness involved in such correspondences is not ideal or analogical, but physical."⁵² *Linguistics and geology are to be welded together.*

5. Linguistics and Geology: The Weak Claim

However, we are still not in a position to understand how this is the case. There is a weak and a strong claim here: first, *words are analogous to rocks* and, second, *words are rocks*. To get an idea of how the strong claim is possible, it is worth beginning with the weaker claim concerning the similarity of linguistics and geology. In order to do so, let us turn to the second "isolated beginning" of a Schellingian philosophy of language. This is located at the end of Schelling's third 1802 lecture, *On University Studies*.

Once again, we find language and geology juxtaposed. Schelling compares the hermeneutic faculty needed to study dead languages with the method required for studying the hidden strata of nature. In both, one needs to "recognise the living spirit" in a seemingly dead product, to discover, that is, the abyss of productivity underlying it. Schelling continues,

Even those who investigate nature only empirically need to know her language in order to understand utterances which have become unintelligible to us. The same is true of philology in the highest sense of the term. The earth is a book made up of miscellaneous fragments dating from very different ages. Each mineral is a real philological problem. In geology we still await the genius who will analyse the earth and show its composition as Wolf [the 18th century German philologist] analysed Homer.⁵³

⁵⁰ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Athlone, 1994), 230; Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 200.

⁵¹ Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 201.

⁵² Ibid, 200. Indeed, in the corresponding passage from Schelling the "like" is conspicuously absent (Schelling, *Werke*, 4:504-5; Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 201). Grant makes the same point in his article, "The Chemistry of Darkness", picking on a passage in which Deleuze asks, "What, after all, are ideas, if not these ants which enter and leave through the fracture of the I?", and asking in return, "What sort of ideas are ants? Actual ones (do thoughts *ant*?), virtual ones, or... are ants *like* ideas?" (Iain Hamilton Grant, "The Chemistry of Darkness", *Pli* 9 (2000), 39) Indeed, later in the article, Grant returns to this question. After having quoted Deleuze's imitation of Schelling's "geological line", Grant asks, "What sort of earth does depth give us? a *quasi* earth, an '*als ob*', regulative rather than constitutive earth, a *merely subjective*, or Kantian earth. Ants are like Ideas, and depth is *like* the heated profiles of tectonic plates." (Ibid, 42) The geo-logical/ana-logical opposition is again discussed in Iain Hamilton Grant, "Kant after Geophilosophy: The Physics of Analogy and the Metaphysics of Nature" in Andrea Rehberg and Rachel Jones eds, *The Matter of Critique: Readings in Kant's Philosophy* (Manchester: Clinamen, 2000), 37.

⁵³ Schelling, *Werke*, 5:246-7; Schelling, *On University Studies*, 39-40.

We have here a claim very similar to one made a few years earlier by Novalis: “Similarity of historical geology and mineralogy to philology”.⁵⁴ Schelling and Novalis both insist on the methodological parallels between the two disciplines.

Why? Let us recall Schelling’s rejection of phenomenalism in his *Naturphilosophie*: by undercutting somatic physics with a dynamics of the productive forces which generate bodies, Schelling goes beyond what is phenomenally given to ground his *Naturphilosophie* in a non-phenomenological realm. To quote Grant,

The fact that the Earth’s creatures are merely the ‘outward phenomenon’ of the proportions of forces, poses the challenge: *if the ground cannot be sought in bodies*, and if all bodies are accessible to sense, then the forces themselves are unintuitable.⁵⁵

A “physical abyss”⁵⁶ thus opens up before the philosopher of nature—an unintuitable realm of immeasurable productivity.

The attraction of geology given such considerations is obvious.⁵⁷ Geology excavates beneath the surface of nature to its grounds; it makes possible a thinking of the non-phenomenal forces which ground reality. Schelling insists on this in a remark made contemporaneously with the lectures *On University Studies*: apart from geological research, “we have no analogue amongst the known processes for the process of... eruption.”⁵⁸ Only geology can deal with the unruly eruptions which emerge out of extra-phenomenal realms. The first draft of the *Weltalter* insists on this point,

The oldest formations of the earth bear such a foreign aspect that we are hardly in a position to form a concept of their time of origin or of the forces that were then at work. Everything that surrounds us refers back to an incredibly deep past... A mass of strata [is] laid one upon the other; the labour of centuries must be stripped away, in order to finally reach the ground.⁵⁹

The philological enterprise is, in essence, the same: a hermeneutical exercise at uncovering the hidden grounds beneath surface meaning. For example, etymology (the focus of *The Deities of Samothrace*) traces the language given to us in the present back to its hidden origins. Just like geology, therefore, philology strips away the sediment to uncover what is primordial. Both sciences proceed beyond the phenomenally given to the forces which generate them, and, as such, both venture into empirically inaccessible depths.

This, therefore, is the similarity between geology and philology. What, however, of their identity? To understand this, a further excursus into Schellingian geology is required.

⁵⁴ Novalis, “On Goethe” in *Philosophical Writings*, ed. and trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar (Albany: SUNY, 1997), 125 (§21).

⁵⁵ Grant, “Physics of the World Soul”, 135.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Although it should be borne in mind in what follows that Schelling seems to have a very specific type of geology in mind: “geognosis”. Geognosis was a late eighteenth and early nineteenth branch of geology, focused specifically on *knowledge of the earth’s crust*. Schelling sees such knowledge as paradigmatic of geology as a whole, hence the use of “excavation” models throughout.

⁵⁸ Schelling, *Werke*, 4:504-5; Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 201. For the historical context out of which Schelling’s engagement with geology emerged, see Grant, “Kant After Geophilosophy”, 44-53.

⁵⁹ F.W.J. Schelling, *Die Weltalter: Fragmente in den Urfassungen von 1811 und 1813*, ed. Manfred Schröter (Munich: Beck, 1946), 11-2; Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 204.

6. 1809 *Inquiries*: From Dynamics to Geology

At the end of Schelling's 1811 *Bericht*, having flagged up the "connection" between language and geology, Schelling continues: the study of language is one of those "subjects which push us back into the abyss of human nature".⁶⁰ To study language, therefore, is to peer into an abyss, and such abysses form the subject matter of Schelling's *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom*. Moreover, it is with the *Philosophical Inquiries* that we also return to the question of religion in Grant's Schellingianism.

The role of religion in the *Inquiries* provides us with the answer to the second question with which this essay began: in what does a speculative approach to religion consist? In line with the "speculative process" outlined above, religion is conceived in the *Inquiries* as no longer determinative of philosophy in general, but rather relegated to a *regional object of Naturphilosophie*. Schelling's task here is to present a "dynamics of religion". Once more, non-linear recapitulation is the key. God and freedom are the self-recapitulation of the forces which constitute the natural world at a higher potency, just as the mental realm is. Freedom is "the final potentiating act... through which the whole of nature found its transfiguration... All philosophy strives only to find this highest expression."⁶¹ Similar things are said of God:

Nothing can be achieved at all by such attenuated conceptions of God [which] separate God as far as possible from all of nature. God is more of a reality than he is a mere moral world-order, and he has in him quite other and more vital activating powers than the barren subtlety abstract idealists ascribe to him. The abhorrence of all reality, which might sully the spiritual through any contact with it, must naturally blind the eye to the origin of evil too. Idealism, if it is not grounded in a vital realism, will become [an] empty and attenuated system.⁶²

God is an assemblage of natural forces too—and it is only philosophy's disdain for nature (its "abhorrence of all reality") which has blinded it to the fact that *nature recapitulates in God*. A doctrine of God, Schelling continues, "could only be developed from the fundamental principles of a genuine philosophy of nature" which "sought out the vital basis of nature".⁶³

Nature self-recapitulates in God—such is Schelling's overarching polemic in the *Inquiries* against those philosophers whose disdain for nature have blinded them to the physical connection of all things. Thus, the *Inquiries* ends by insisting that there is no need to rely on the Bible or historical faith in order to understand religion. Nature is a sufficient key to any theory of the divine: "We have an earlier revelation than any written one—nature. If the understanding of that unwritten revelation were inaugurated, the only true system of religion and science would appear."⁶⁴ Just as the original Schellingian project insisted that there is no gulf between the real and the mental, so too here Schellingian dynamics is *extended* even further, and consequently becomes even more "unconditioned".

⁶⁰ Schelling, *Werke*, 8:454.

⁶¹ Schelling, *Werke*, 7:550; Schelling, *Inquiries*, 24-5. Translation modified. (Although, if Grant is right and Schelling's notion of recapitulation is genuinely non-linear, no product is ever "final".)

⁶² *Ibid.*, 7:356; 30.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 7:377-8; 54-5. Thus, Schelling concludes later in the *Inquiries*, "We have explained God as the living unity of forces" (*ibid.*, 7:394; 74). Indeed, his famous distinction between ground and existence in God is a distinction between different potentiations of nature (*ibid.*, 7:357-8; 32).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 7:415-6; 98.

However, this is not the whole story. Schelling is no longer interested in providing a *purely dynamic* account of religion, but instead offers a *geology of religion*. This is not so much a substantial change as a shift in attitude. From the beginning, Schelling was aware of the non-phenomenality of the productivity out of which nature was generated. It is only, however, in 1809 that Schelling faces this issue head-on.

Schelling here focuses even more extensively on the philology of geological excavation he had so briefly invoked in *On University Studies*. He writes in the *Inquiries*,

The world as we now behold it is all rule, order and form; but the unruly lies ever in the depths as though it might again break through... This is the incomprehensible basis of reality in all things, the irreducible remainder which cannot be resolved into reason by the greatest exertion but always remains in the depths.⁶⁵

Schellingian dynamics has to deal with the “the unruly”. It is for this reason geology becomes Schelling’s new model for *Naturphilosophie*—a model (as we saw in regard to *On University Studies*) that can cope with the unruly abyss with which the philosopher is confronted. In the *Inquiries*, *Naturphilosophie* finally becomes “transcendental geology”.⁶⁶

The *Inquiries* follows *On University Studies* in re-appropriating for philosophy geology’s struggle with what is unruly, excessive and threatening. It is only geology which can cope with “a phenomenal catastrophism”.⁶⁷ It is this sustained conjunction of geological thought with a naturephilosophical account of God which has turned the stomach of so many readers of the *Inquiries* from the first (Eschenmayer and Jacobi) through to Manfred Frank. As Eschenmayer acutely observed on the work’s publication,

Your essay on human freedom seems to me a complete transformation of ethics into physics, a consumption of the free by the necessary... of the moral by the natural, and above all a complete depotentiation of the higher into the lower order of things.⁶⁸

To which Grant adds, “We can image Eschenmayer’s shock: why does this work on the subject of freedom contain so much geology?”⁶⁹

The geological foundations of the *Inquiries* are fully manifest in the history of religion Schelling sketches. As one might expect, this historical sketch follows the unruly depths of nature as it self-recapitulates in increasingly higher potencies. Nature generates itself into fuller, more actualised forms. As time goes on, the basis self-recapitulates in increasingly more *ideal* forms, transforming itself into light, spirit and finally love.⁷⁰ However, (and it is here Schelling decisively moves beyond a “dynamics of religion” to a “geology of religion”) interspersed between these successive potentiations of nature into the divine are a series of *catastrophes*. For example, “Because the principle of the depths can never give birth for itself to true and complete unity, the time comes in which all this glory decays as through horrible disease, and finally chaos again ensues”⁷¹, or again,

⁶⁵ Ibid, 359-60; 34.

⁶⁶ Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 192.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 142.

⁶⁸ Schelling, *Werke*, 8:150; Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 202.

⁶⁹ Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 202.

⁷⁰ Schelling, *Werke*, 7:378-80; *Inquiries* 56-8.

⁷¹ Ibid, 379; 56.

At last there results the crisis in the *turba gentium* which overflow the foundations of the ancient world as once the waters of the beginning again covered the creations of primeval time.⁷²

History in the *Inquiries* incorporates a catastrophic flooding, or, in Grant's words, "a geological eruption in the midst of the philosophy of freedom."⁷³ *Naturphilosophie* must not only chart the series of bodies *generated* through nature's self-recapitulation, but also the "series of bodies *repeatedly swept away* by this periodic recapitulation of primal forces".⁷⁴ This is why a geological model is necessary.

We are now in a position to understand the identity—and not just the similarity—of philology and geology which Schelling intimated in *On University Studies*. Moreover, we are now able to do as the 1811 *Bericht* advises: think words in connection with the geological. As we have seen, religion is nature recapitulated: there is no separation between the two; rather, an identity. In the same way, following the Schellingian notion of non-linear recapitulation, rocks and words *are* nature in different potencies. Both philology and geology attempt to uncover *exactly the same ground*. The unruly itself is the ultimate goal of both endeavours. What is more, religion should now be added to the mix. Nature self-recapitulates its unruly basis in forming God just as much as in forming minerals and syllables. They all have the same ground (the unruly) and are generated by the same subject (productive nature). As such, religious studies, philology and geology are identical pursuits. *This is no mere analogous relation, but a physical one*. Just as we saw Schelling speak of the need to "cognise the physical in language", so too the *Inquiries* insists upon "cognising the physical in God". By so doing, language and religion are subjected to the speculative process: they are incorporated as regional subjects of an overarching, unconditioned *Naturphilosophie*.

7. The Deities of Samothrace: Excavating Nature's Experiments in Divinity

To chart the unruly is to record nature's experiments in religions and languages, and crucial to Schelling are nature's past experiments, and especially the experimental catastrophes which seem to obey no laws. It is only by measuring such ancient test-runs that Schelling hopes to unlock the secrets by which future experiments will succeed. He geologically, philologically and theologically excavates the manner in which the abyss of forces potentiated itself and disrupted its own potentiations over millions of years.

The Deities of Samothrace is one such geological excavation of nature's experimentation, and, as always, *this language must be taken literally*. If there is anything that we have learnt from the foregoing, it is the need to take Schelling at his word, to interpret his language literally, not metaphorically. Schelling's ultimate concern in the *Deities*—the etymology of the names of the gods of the ancient Samothracian mystery-cult (the Cabiri)—is achieved *by means of a very concrete and literal geological survey of the island itself*. The work opens,

The island of Samothrace rises from the northern part of the Aegean Sea... Ancient geographers surmised that great convulsions of nature afflicted these regions even up to human times. It may be that the waters of the Black Sea, raised simply by flooding, first broke through the Thracian Strait, and then through the Hellespont. Or that the force of a subterranean volcano altered the level of the waters. The oldest

⁷² Ibid, 380; 57-8.

⁷³ Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 17.

⁷⁴ Grant, "Physics of the World Soul", 135. My emphasis.

Samothrace stories, transmuted into monuments exhibited in commemoration, preserved an account of this event, and from that time on they fostered the reverence and patronage of the native gods.⁷⁵

Geology is the starting point of the inquiry and, in particular, the geological irruption (commemorated in “the oldest Samothrace stories”) which triggered a new reverence for the divine among the people of Samothrace. The Samothracian mystery-cult, Schelling implies, was born from a “great convulsion of nature” (the “*turba gentium*” of the *Inquiries*). Schelling lingers over this circumstance further in a note to the paragraph,

At that time when large tracts of Asia would have been covered continuously, others for a time, the lowlands of Samothrace also were inundated, as the inhabitants reported; on the highest mountain peaks they had sought aid with persistent vows to the native gods. Diodorus Siculus adds that around the circumference of the whole island still stand altars which identify the limits of the peril and the deliverance.⁷⁶

Schelling’s point could be mistaken for a Humean one: an ignorant humanity fabricated superstitions to cope with nature’s irregularity. However, nothing could be further from the case and Schelling never tired of heaping scorn on Enlightenment explanations of religion.⁷⁷ Instead, Schelling’s point is that the names of the Cabiri *commemorate and bear witness to this ancient natural catastrophe*. As Schelling himself writes, the flooding was “transmuted into monuments exhibited in commemoration.” By “cognising the physical in language” and recognising “the connection” between the linguistic and the geological, an excavation of the names of the Cabiri can reveal how nature operates in its more catastrophic moments. For example, the name *Axiokersus* contains the Hebrew root *hrs* which, in turn, is connected to fire, and, in this way, it manifests the ancient wisdom that (according to Heraclitus): “The world is an eternal living fire, which at intervals... flares up and is extinguished.”⁷⁸ The catastrophic unruliness of nature is implicitly contained in these names, and *to etymologically analyse the names is also simultaneously to reveal the workings of nature itself*. Recalling his evocation of nature in the *Inquiries* as “an earlier revelation than anything written” and “the only true system of religion and science”, Schelling here speaks of the “scientific system” preserved in the names of the Cabiri as “a primordial system older than all written documents, which is the common source of all religious doctrines and representations.”⁷⁹ Schelling’s etymological analysis reveals nature as it operates over a time-span too great for human representation to bear.

However, once again, to maintain that the names “bear witness” to natural catastrophe *is to reduce a geological to a representational relation*, and so to dilute Schelling’s intent. The names, in fact, *are* the unruly ground of this natural catastrophe recapitulated. Etymological excavation *is* (and does not merely “aid”) geological excavation. “The secret history of the gods”⁸⁰ is that they are generated from the same forces as the *turba gentium*, and so “the hazardous path of philology”⁸¹ is the same path taken by geology. The names of the Cabiri are not just analogous to

⁷⁵ Schelling, *Werke*, 8:347; F.W.J. Schelling, *The Deities of Samothrace*, ed. and trans. Robert F. Brown (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977), 15.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 8:372; 31.

⁷⁷ For example, see *ibid.*, 8:400-1; 37.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 8:391; 34 (Diels-Kranz reference for the Heraclitean fragment: B30).

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 8:401; 37.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 8:348; 15.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 8:351; 18.

the system of potencies in nature; *they are its recapitulation. They do not reflect nature, but repeat nature.*

This view is summed up in Schelling's idiosyncratic translation of a Heraclitean fragment; a fragment in which, Schelling notes, "all of antiquity and the finer humanity... is reflected fully":

Das Eine weise Wesen will nicht das alleinige genannt seyn, den Namen Zeus will es!
The One wise nature does not wish to be called that exclusively; it wishes the name 'Zeus'.⁸²

Nature, that is, self-recapitulates in the divine names.

8. Conclusion

Such, then, is one possible answer to the two questions with which I began: what happens to language after the post-linguistic turn? and in what does a speculative approach to religion consist? According to Schelling, language and religion must undergo "the speculative process", relegating them from philosophical media impeding our access to the world to regional objects of a speculative *Naturphilosophie*. A physics of language and a physics of religion are the preliminary result of such a philosophical operation, and they are thus the means by which Schelling himself passes the extensity test we posed of him. *Naturphilosophie* is unconditioned because it *absorbs* linguistics and theology. Moreover, according to Schelling, these two distinct fields of physical enquiry can be further united in a "geology of divine names", an attempt to think together the abyss of forces recapitulated in both language and religion. Nature recurs and mutates into Zeus, Christ and Krishna, as well as into the names, "Zeus", "Christ" and "Krishna". What is more, the Schellingian philosopher of nature—if she truly wishes to practice an absolute, unconditioned form of philosophy—must follow nature even there. To pass Grant's test of extensity, speculative philosophy must be willing *to chart all of nature's experiments*.

And this, in consequence, is precisely what is required of twenty-first century speculative philosophies. They must dare to pursue nature into its most esoteric phenomena, leaving behind their comfort zones of Lovecraftian monsters and Okenian slime, so as to go after those products of nature that sit less easily with their ethos; those products, that is, which contemporary speculative philosophies still need to incorporate so as to become genuinely unconditioned. We still await speculative accounts of the names of Allah and the words of the Nicene Creed.

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⁸² Ibid, 8:362; 25 (Diels-Kranz reference: B32).

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