



The materials of mythology: the limits of Schelling's *Philosophy of Mythology*

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ABSTRACT. Schelling postulates the origin of mythology as relative monotheism, preceding the polytheistic system of gods presumably present in all mythologies. A monotheism relative to the polytheism that succeeds it is understood as an inaugural moment in the formation of the consciousness of divinity, and the passage to polytheism is seen as a necessary development to overcome a relative monotheism towards absolute monotheism in the history of peoples. We would like to argue, however, that the original intuition about the communality of all mythologies is dependent on a specific interpretation and selection of the material sources of the mythologies as Schelling understood them, which, the author claims, should be taken as an already finalised work. This material delimitation is linked to Schelling's position not only on what authentically constitutes a 'system of the gods', but also on which humans constitute a people, to which a mythology belongs. However, while broadening the concept of mythology seems to be a peaceful solution to the problem of the limitations of its sources, the same cannot be said of the original intuition at the basis of the project. If this intuition is the affirmation of the consciousness of divinity as the unformed memory of a previous harmonious state, before differentiation into a polytheistic system, we ask whether this relative monotheism can be understood as a universal principle, or whether different mythological traditions would be irreducible to each other. We point to the shamanistic accounts of Amazonian cosmologies as a counterpoint to examine the role of the consciousness of divinity in the unfolding of mythology and the historical consciousness of peoples. We propose that the anthropological concept of perspectivism, by which many of these cosmologies are described, will allow us to ask the question about the possibility of a different understanding of the formation of consciousness.

Keywords: mythology; consciousness; perspectivism; idealism.

Os Materiais da Mitologia: Os limites da *Filosofia da Mitologia* de Schelling

RESUMO. Schelling postula como origem da mitologia um monoteísmo relativo, precedendo o sistema politeísta dos deuses presumivelmente presente em todas as mitologias. Um monoteísmo relativo ao politeísmo que o sucede é entendido como um momento inaugural na formação da consciência da divindade, e a passagem ao politeísmo será vista como um desenvolvimento necessário para superar um monoteísmo relativo em direção ao monoteísmo absoluto na história dos povos. Gostaríamos de argumentar, no entanto, que a intuição original sobre a comunalidade de todas as mitologias é dependente de uma específica interpretação e seleção das fontes materiais das mitologias tal como Schelling as compreendia, e que, afirma o autor, deveriam ser tomadas como um trabalho já finalizado. Esta delimitação do material está vinculada à posição de Schelling não apenas quanto ao que constitui autenticamente um 'sistema dos deuses', mas também quanto a quais humanos constituem um povo, ao qual pertence uma mitologia. Contudo, embora a ampliação do conceito de mitologia pareça ser uma solução pacífica para o problema das limitações de suas fontes, o mesmo não se pode dizer da intuição original à base do projeto. Se essa intuição é a afirmação da consciência da divindade como a lembrança não formada de um estado harmonioso prévio, antes da diferenciação em um sistema politeísta, perguntamos se esse monoteísmo relativo pode ser entendido como um princípio universal, ou se diferentes tradições mitológicas seriam irreduzíveis umas às outras. Nós apontamos como contraponto para os relatos xamanísticos das cosmologias amazônicas para examinar o papel da consciência da divindade no desdobramento da mitologia e da consciência histórica dos povos. Propomos que o conceito antropológico de perspectivismo, pelo qual são descritas muitas dessas cosmologias, permitirá colocar a questão acerca da possibilidade de uma distinta compreensão da formação da consciência.

Palavras-chave: mitologia; consciência; perspectivismo; idealismo.

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Introduction

Schelling dedicated a great measure of his efforts early on to the problem of the apparent contradiction between Nature and Spirit, Necessity and Freedom. From the beginning, as attested, for example, by the *Philosophical letters on dogmatism and criticism* (1795)¹, Schelling would have found in art the path towards the resolution of this problem, proposing a truly universal system conceived in the form of a 'system of art' as a confluence of speculative physics and ethics. The resolution or absolution of the contradiction and separation between nature and history through a 'system of art' is itself recognized as a necessity. (Schelling, 1989). It may not be deemed as an aesthetic solution born of creative genius, able to join what was separated through a mere act of will, nor could it come from the exegesis of works of art, revealing the subjective affirmation of freedom of the modern spirit, or exposing the fruits of the kind of universal individual who was, above all, Homer. In fact, for Schelling, this contradiction is not a problem in the sense of an obstruction or impediment, an imperfect stage that must be overcome by any means. Nature and history are themselves already mythological, and not transformed by art into a higher meaning. Certainly, the productive nature of art, according to the lectures on *Philosophy of Art*, is to conform the images of divinity, but divinity itself is not an invention of art, nor the gift of subjective meaning to an unsuspecting nature. Art honours divinity through its symbolic character, giving voice to the concealed activity of nature. Art, however, in the sense of an inventive product of genius, seems to be an unnecessary medium within the framework of the later *Philosophy of Mythology* conferences of the 1840s. In the seventh lecture of the *Philosophy of Mythology*, a posthumous work collected from lectures given in Munich and Berlin from 1834-1846, Schelling asserts: "We are not the ones who place mythology, but mythology itself has placed us in the perspective from which, at the moment, we will consider it. The content of this conference is henceforth no longer the mythology as explained by us but is the mythology as it explains itself [*die sich selbst erklärende Mythologie*]" (SW XII, 139)². For our present discussion, we will focus the Schelling's presentation of his philosophical project in *Historical-critical introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, the inaugural series of lectures of his time in Berlin beginning in 1841. In this posthumous work, Schelling proposes that the mythological experience and the symbols generated by it are self-interpretative. Authentic mythic symbols are not produced by a reflective intelligence, or otherwise erudition, to create an arbitrary 'world' or 'reality', as a kind game or a child's play in itself contained by the set of rules that determines what is and is not part of the 'game'. For Schelling, the mythical symbol has its origin in the pre-reflective immersion of the human soul in the divine substance of the cosmos. Schelling will argue in great length that we cannot assume that Mythology is the invention of an individual or group of individuals, but not having emerged from nothing, its origin will be attributed to the spiritual lives of the peoples to whom the myths belong, prompting the question on the emergence of the spiritual unity of a singular people.

The philosophy of mythology

Schelling's construction of the Philosophy of Mythology in the first set of lectures known as the *Historical-critical Introduction* is carefully laid out as a patient exam of its subject matter; the philosopher does not rely on the impact of a far-reaching statement to justify his line of questioning, but instead he draws the principles from which he will ultimately extrapolate this late iteration of his recurrent systematic philosophy, predicated upon Mythology and ultimately Revelation, acknowledged as singular activity and discourse, not derived from any other.

In the first three lectures of his *Introduction*, Schelling argues that neither philosophy nor poetry can be the causal and real principle of mythology because they are not able to impart a sense of truth and reality to the mythological representations, which is a necessary condition to account for its perceived character as a common, universal ground for all peoples and its perceived relation to the emergence of language itself.

For whatever more precise determination one wanted to give to it, it would always have to be explained at the same time how humanity, or a primordial people, or people at all, were in their earliest times equally seized upon by an irresistible inner drive and how they would have produced a poetry whose content was the gods and the history of the gods (SW XI, 15).

As consequence, he also rejects the idea that mythology is invented by individuals, whether they are poets, philosophers, or priests, because creating and introducing a mythology exceeds the ability and authority of

¹ Cf. Schelling (1989).

² For the sake of brevity and ease of access, we use the following edition for Schelling's works: Schelling (1856) referenced by the acronym 'SW', followed by volume number in Roman numerals and page number in Arabic numerals. When available, references to Portuguese or English translations are also given. All translations of Schelling's quotations are ours.

any individual or group. The true explanation of mythology must lie outside of the previous theories, and it must be something independent of both philosophy and poetry; mythology must contain a truth in itself, as itself. "There is indeed a truth in mythology, but not one that is placed in it *intentionally*" (SW XI, 12) – it eludes us, it reveals truth without revealing meaning.

Schelling's philosophy of mythology rejects allegorical interpretations that view mythology as a mere symbol for something else. He argues that such interpretations fail to capture the true essence and origin of mythology. Allegorical interpretations often reduce mythology to a vehicle for conveying moral, physical, or philosophical truths. Schelling also rejects natural-scientific interpretations that view mythology as an allegory of the history of nature. He argues that these interpretations fail to preserve the sense of a real content in mythology. Schelling's critique of allegorical interpretations highlights their limitations in understanding the true nature and origin of mythology. He argues that these interpretations often reduce mythology to a mere symbol or a vehicle for conveying pre-existing knowledge. However, Schelling contends that these interpretations are limited in their ability to explain the universal character and origin of mythology. He critiques the euhemeristic method, which interprets mythology as a historical account of kings and heroes elevated to divinity. This interpretation, according to Schelling, denies mythology's organic meaning and its connection to our relationship with the divine. Similarly, personifications of moral or natural properties do not adequately explain the origin of mythology. While they may be useful symbolic forms, they do not address the underlying question of how the gods came into being. This type of interpretation assumes the corrupted memory of historical events or figures as explanation for the origin of myth, as much as natural-scientific explanation assumes that there must always be a causal connection between a mythological event and a natural occurrence. Further, these kinds of explanations fail to acknowledge that which, for Schelling, is the fundamental character of mythology – that the gods themselves are real, i.e., that the consciousness of the divinity in its particular form is an authentic experience of the universal divine character. Schelling's position is not indiscriminately applied to all potential religious symbols or conceptions, but it is a core assumption of his account of mythology as a system of gods, based on the perceived necessity to explain how the consciousness of the one true God comes into being overall in historical terms. According to Beach (1994, p. 44), "It must be acknowledged that the facility with which Schelling accepted the reality of the relationship between the pagan divinities and the 'true God' of monotheism was somewhat uncritical". We can understand Schelling's willingness to assert the authenticity of polytheistic religions in part as a backwards projection of his intention of explaining the relationship of consciousness with the revealed God, presuming a necessary and organic formation of the positing of divinity in a sense that is intrinsically linked to consciousness itself, in a sense that could never have arisen independently, "[...] but rather that the nature of the primordial relation to God must lie deeper than consciousness itself." (Beach, 1994, p. 44).

Historical investigation itself is called upon by Schelling to testify on behalf of this thesis, and in Herodotus he finds the account of the "[...] *newness* of the history of the gods as such, that it is completely and utterly Hellenic" (SW XI, 18). Schelling suggests that the explanation of mythology would gain certainty if we focused not only on the general concept of poetry in the history of the gods but also on specific poets, such as Hesiod and Homer, who, according to Herodotus, formulated theogony for the Hellenic people. He explores Herodotus's account of the Pelasgians, the name used by ancient Greeks to refer to their presumed antecedents in the Aegean Sea, to establish the relationship between Greek mythology and poetry, providing a glimpse into a state of consciousness where the gods were not yet fully objectified or understood. Schelling questions whether the objectification of the gods should be understood as an emergence of consciousness or as a detachment from the organic becoming of the divine. Schelling emphasizes that the study of mythology requires not only the collection of material and linguistic artifacts but also the development of a profound understanding of the mythological object itself. He argues that this understanding emerges gradually through the study of diverse mythologies, a project he will undertake in the subsequent years in his lectures on the Philosophy of Mythology, in which, nevertheless, only Greek and, in a smaller scale, Hindu Mythologies are seriously considered as *systems of the gods*. Even the Nordic sagas are set aside, and in the lonely reference to the *Edda* in his works, Schelling affirms his dislike of the poem (SW XIII, 346). According to Jankélévitch (2005),

In search of the Holy Grail, the conscience will travel through the cruel vicissitudes of pagan history. It is a true pilgrimage, an incredible adventure. The Calvary of Consciousness is divided into three epochs, corresponding to the main phases of the conflict that divides B and A. At first, mad power reigns unchallenged, and at the end of this first epoch it barely begins to yield to the increasingly pressing demands of A. The second epoch is the age of Dionysus:

despite a few short-lived bursts of energy, B must submit to the spiritual principle; its defeat inaugurates the complete mythologies of the third age: the Egyptian, the Hindu and above all the Greek (Jankélévitch, 2005, p. 214).

Central to Schelling's philosophy is precisely the concept of *theogony*, in particular its understanding in Greek myth. This system encompasses the natural and historical relationships between the gods, including their generation and their role in cosmic events. Schelling questions whether the meaning of these mythological elements is solely derived from their emergence, suggesting that they may possess a deeper, enduring significance. He argues that the truth revealed in mythology is not explicit but rather emerges subtly, suggesting that the foundation of the history of the gods lies beyond the realm of poetry.

Still, the science of the Philosophy of Mythology does not postulate its object from any ideal, abstract conception, but relies on the historical research that precedes it without taking over its duties of collecting the material or linguistic artefacts of mythology and considering this task complete. Furthermore, the relationship of philosophy with its object, Mythology, depends upon not only on the collection of the material, but also on the development of an understanding of what the mythological object is. The investigation on mythology "[...] only expanded gradually [...]", (SW XI, 6), and the transition from the study of particular traditions to the speculative concern with mythology as such presupposes the knowledge of various mythologies, allowing for the insight that there is something common in all of them.

We understand that holding the task of material collection of mythological materials complete for the purposes of the project of a philosophy of mythology is a methodological requirement, otherwise we would have to assume that the philosophy of mythology should be grounded on a science different from itself and immediately defeating its purpose. Mythology, as an autonomous, self-clarifying spiritual activity, demands and serves as ground for an equally autonomous philosophy of mythology, through which the principle of mythology, what Schelling understands as the universal constant in all of mythology, is fully formed in consciousness. A philosophy of mythology cannot be grounded, therefore, neither in the presupposed forms of poesy or in a presupposed philosophical knowledge, as Schelling will argue in great detail, neither in history, linguistics, anthropology, or archaeology, that would have an even lesser claim of anteriority.

It is however undeniable that, if we wish to hold a philosophy of mythology as a possibility, and not as a chapter of the collected works of one thinker among others in the annals of the history of philosophy, it would be a strange proposition to consider the collection of materials completed as Schelling considered it in his time - and we have no reason to assume that is what Schelling meant. That is first because of the external, though just, observation that considerable progress has been made in all those fields that are of interest for the research of mythological materials, especially in comparative linguistics and anthropology. Schelling himself observes that there is much on the origins of the languages and the peoples that we do not know.

Because not only no philosophical consciousness, but rather also no human consciousness at all, is thinkable without language, the ground of language could not be laid consciously; and yet, the deeper we inquire into language, the more definitely it becomes known that its depths exceed by far that of the most conscious product. It is with language as it is with the organic beings; we believe we see them blindly emerge into being and cannot deny the inscrutable intentionality of their formation, right up to the smallest detail (SW XI, 40).

He explores the concept of language as a foundation for both philosophy and consciousness. Schelling suggests that language is not merely a conscious creation but rather an organic product that emerges from deeper, unconscious forces. He compares the formation of language to the organic development of living beings, highlighting the intentionality and complexity involved. Schelling further argues that the poetic element in mythology is not external but rather immanent, essential to thought itself. He suggests that mythology is an organic product, distinct from a merely mechanistic explanation. However, he acknowledges the difficulty in defining the term 'organic' and its distinction from the natural. Schelling's analysis is grounded in his understanding of the co-effectivity of poetry and philosophy in the emergence of mythology. He suggests that while both poetry and philosophy contribute to the formation of mythology, the ultimate explanation lies in a force that transcends both.

Perhaps it could be argued that the collected mythological materials merely inform the philosophical investigation proper, and a simple update of the sources would not imply any fundamental changes in the project. However, we must contend with the possibility that a transformed understanding of the sources of mythology is not a simple addition to the monumental work previously completed, and it may well justify questioning the second presupposition needed, according to Schelling, for a philosophy of mythology to be pursue: that is, the idea that there is a commonality in all of mythology.

First presented as intuition of the fact that there is something common to all mythologies, Schelling's conclusion is taken to be a necessary outcome of the correct understanding of mythology, i.e., that mythology is fundamentally a theogony, "[...] a becoming of *God* in consciousness," he says, "[...] to which *the gods* are related only as individual, productive moments." (SW XI, 198). Schelling postulates as the origin of mythology a relative monotheism, preceding the polytheistic system of Gods present in all mythologies. This historical monotheism "[...] could have been preserved through nothing so decisively as through the consciousness of One universal God common to all humanity" (SW XI, 119). The consciousness of one universal God does not mean for Schelling it is identical with the idea of the one revealed God, that is entirely non-mythological. A monotheism relative to the polytheism that succeeds it is understood as an inaugural moment in the formation of the consciousness of the divinity, and the passage to polytheism will be seen as a necessary development in overcoming a relative monotheism towards ultimately absolute, non-mythological monotheism, in the history of the peoples. He further explores the necessity of the monotheistic moment in the development of mythology. Schelling suggests that mythology can be understood as a remembrance of the attachment to a dominant force in consciousness, and a consciousness of the relationship of people with its own past, in the sense of the past formation of its spiritual life. However, he argues that the individual moments within mythology may not be inherently organic or natural, i.e., they would not perfectly map or translate to a conceptual understanding of the formation of consciousness. The manifold gods in polytheism would not correspond to natural forces we are able to comprehend through rational means, and such explanations do not substitute or reveal hidden truths in the role of gods in such systems. The persistence of polytheistic elements in monotheistic consciousness may be due to our own detachment and objectification of history. He distinguishes between factual history and spiritual history, emphasizing that the theogony of the self is not merely a preserved past but a reflection of a people's ongoing becoming.

The material limitations

We would like to argue, however, that the original intuition about the commonality of all mythologies, that sets the path towards Schelling's understanding of relative monotheism as the principle of mythology, is perhaps more dependent on a specific interpretation (and selection) of the mythological material available and hold as completed than should be case if the project of the philosophy of mythology is to be maintained as a productive possibility. We note that this question is related to our broader project of investigating the relationship between the philosophy of nature and of mythology.

This critical assessment does not propose simply considering different sources than those that Schelling used or had available. The sources themselves are not all that important for the idea of a philosophy of mythology, but they shed light on the understanding of its principle. Schelling acknowledges a commonality in all mythologies and their role in the emergence and separation of the peoples, yet 'peoples' functions as an exclusive concept. Not all 'races of humanity', as Schelling uses the term, may be truly considered a 'people', and the *Historical-critical introduction* notoriously dismisses the peoples of South America, among others, according to the account of the Spanish naturalist Felix Azara, praised by Schelling, as lacking in humanity, even deprived of a proper language, and devoid of any religious representations. Schelling says,

A people whose language was so richly articulated and sufficiently flexible to designate scientific concepts with thoroughly particular terms will not have expressed itself through mere clicking sounds, like the African bushmen. The people to whom the presumed philosophers belong cannot be thought of on the same level as that of those savages in South America; to whom—and as Don Felix Azara recounts, even Concilien virtually denied humanity—the Catholic clergy had refused to impart the sacraments and who finally were able to be pronounced human only via a decree of the pope, and in continual opposition from clergy in that land. For up until now only the human races of the type mentioned have been encountered without any religious representations (SW XI, 40).

Schelling reiterates this exclusion of the South American peoples of the very condition of humanity several times throughout the *Historical-critical Introduction*. We will not dwell on Schelling's views; Azara's account is itself particularly dismissive of the peoples he claims to portray, to say the least, and Schelling's acceptance of his account of the Guarani peoples is explicitly based on little more than the pretence of authority attributed to Azara, who, having proved his knowledge elsewhere, would not be wrong in this regard³.

³ On this matter, Depew (2015) asserts "That Schelling excludes South Americans from the process of revelation through mythology, while allowing them their humanity, even if only externally and insufficiently, suggests that what he means by 'humanity' is something other than the species. It might be suggested that Schelling conceives of humanity as condition rather than as species." (Depew, 2015, p. 20)

In a reductive manner, if the criteria to understand a group as a people would be their possession of a language and religious representations, a simple solution would be to point to Schelling's ignorance that in fact, there are no peoples in this Earth that lack either a fully developed, complex language nor religious representations – although this last point would, nevertheless, require not only an external, material correction of the sources and scope of the definition of peoples, but also a review of the concept of divinity, which Schelling denies for certain entities found, for example, in European folklore, and regards others as owing their being to true divinities, as is the case of nymphs or dryads, for example, in Greek mythology. Any spiritual representation found in American indigenous peoples are not seen as divinities, as gods in a proper sense, reinforcing the view that they lack any sort of religion or mythology, i.e., a *system of the gods*. To change this conception and correct the sources of a potential positive philosophy of mythology might not seem to be a difficult task, but one of the implications of this simple correction might very well be the assumption that all mythologies, because they are to be taken as a whole as the material source of a philosophical system of mythology, articulate in the same way a system of the gods and their gods are of the same nature. Ultimately, a review of Schelling's materials sources that does not propose a critical review of the project of a system of mythology should not be our interest. This revision should not be arbitrary, however, in the sense of simply expanding the definition of the term and reducing all cosmology to the same taxonomic system, but will depend, on the contrary, on understanding the possibility of other cosmologies corresponding to their own autonomous and irreducible experience of the generation of divinities in consciousness. And because the positivity of divinity in consciousness is, for Schelling, ordered according to nature, not just as a *Faktum*, but a theogonic process in its entirety, the succession from relative monotheism to polytheism will be seen as just as necessary, just as real, in the formation of the free spirit as the experience of the separation of the subject from its object and its return to itself through reflection. According to Schelling,

Certainly, mythology has no reality [*Realität*] outside of consciousness; but if it only takes its course in the determinations of consciousness, that is, in its representations, then nonetheless this course of events, this succession of representations themselves cannot again be such a one that is merely imagined; it must have actually taken place, must have actually occurred in consciousness (SW XI, 124).

If we assume, as it seems undeniable, that 1. There is no group of human beings that does not constitute a people; and 2. All peoples possess mythologies and cosmologies; should we assume that all peoples comprehend and experience their divinities in the same manner? Perhaps the restrictive concept of divinity rightfully points towards a difference of understanding of the becoming of the extra natural powers expressed in all mythologies that, because it denies the statute of a mythology or religion representation for some systems, obscures a greater complexity to be found in any possible emerging consciousness of the divine. Here, although we are not ready to immediately offer an answer, we raise a doubt that could only be answered by a renewed exam of the materials of mythology that reinstates the question on what, intuitively, we understand as mythology.

At first, the presumption of a broader concept of mythology does not seem to pose much difficulty, but if the initial intuition of mythology is not simply a vague idea of what it entails, but it is the yet unformed remembrance of a previous harmonious state, before the differentiation, i.e. the posit of the consciousness of the godhead, although it is not the remembrance of a fully revealed consciousness of God, it is just to ask if this relative monotheism can be truly understood as an universal principle of mythology. Furthermore, even if this strict concept of the divinity and its emergence in consciousness, whose *telos* may only be a revealed God, is an excessively limited perspective to be assumed as overarching principle of mythology, the question remains, what would then be such a principle? After all, Schelling has convincingly demonstrated the necessity of such a principle, i.e., a common, original aspect of all mythologies, as a requirement for the project of a philosophy of mythology – otherwise, the possible approach to mythology would not be a philosophical one in a systematic sense, but it would revert to being a merely historical one, aided, perhaps, by anthropology, linguistics, psychoanalysis and even philosophy, at least instrumentally, but not philosophically grounded and unfolded.

The otherness of other cosmologies

As part of this investigation, we elect as a counterpoint of Schelling's proposed scheme the shamanistic account of the differentiation of human and non-human peoples throughout several Amazonian cosmologies, in order to examine the role of monotheism and polytheism in the unfolding of mythology and ultimately, of the historical consciousness of the peoples. Would it be possible to understand the notion of an

undifferentiated people that precedes the irruption of humanity and their others, according to Amazonian cosmology, as the kind of relative monotheism that Schelling proposes, or do such cosmologies demands a different understanding of the process? We will only have here the opportunity to portrait a general picture of a complex problem with recourse of the recent anthropological literature. Our proposal, we note, still finds itself in its initial steps, is intensively informed by the works of Brazilian Anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2004) and related authors who advanced the concept of Amazonian perspectivism as a framework through which anthropological research and the cultures of peoples with whom they are in contact are comparable intellectual operations.

I use 'perspectivism' as a label for a set of ideas and practices found throughout indigenous America and to which I shall refer, for simplicity's sake, as though it were a cosmology. This cosmology imagines a universe peopled by different types of subjective agencies, human as well as nonhuman, each endowed with the same generic type of soul, that is, the same set of cognitive and volitional capacities. The possession of a similar soul implies the possession of similar concepts, which determine that all subjects see things in the same way. In particular, individuals of the same species see each other (and each other only) as humans see themselves, that is, as beings endowed with human figure and habits, seeing their bodily and behavioral aspects in the form of human culture. What changes when passing from one species of subject to another is the 'objective correlative,' the referent of these concepts: what jaguars see as 'manioc beer' (the proper drink of people, jaguar-type or otherwise), humans see as 'blood'. Where we see a muddy salt-lick on a riverbank, tapirs see their big ceremonial house, and so on. Such difference of perspective—not a plurality of views of a single world, but a single view of different worlds—cannot derive from the soul, since the latter is the common original ground of being. Rather, such difference is located in the bodily differences between species, for the body and its affections (in Spinoza's sense, the body's capacities to affect and be affected by other bodies) is the site and instrument of ontological differentiation and referential disjunction (Viveiros de Castro, 2004, p. 5).

Viveiros de Castro's perspectivism is a radical approach to anthropology that challenges the Western notion of a single, objective reality. Instead, he proposes that different cultures and beings perceive and experience the world from distinct perspectives. He argues that these perspectives are not simply different ways of interpreting a common reality but rather create different realities altogether. This perspectivism is rooted in the idea that all beings, including humans, animals, and spirits, possess agency and subjectivity, and that their understanding of the world is shaped by their unique ontologies. In his extensive account of Yanomami cosmology, the shaman David Kopenawa (2013) narrates the understanding of a world not bound by set categories, in a state of transformation and coming into being that is undistinguishable of being itself, and even so they portray how intrinsic to their cosmology is the idea of the generation of spirits, ancestry, belonging, commonality and differentiation.

These images of game that the shamans make dance are not those of the animals we hunt. They are those of their fathers, who came into being in the beginning of time. As I said, they are the images of the animal ancestors we call *yarori*. A very long time ago, when the forest was still young, our ancestors—who were humans with animal names—metamorphosed into game. The human peccaries became peccaries. The human deer became deer. The human agoutis became agoutis. These *yarori* first people's skins became those of the peccaries, the deer, and the agoutis that live in the forest. So it is ancestors turned other that we hunt and eat today. On the other hand, the images that we bring down and make dance as *xapiri* are their form of ghosts. These are their real hearts and true inner parts. And so these animal ancestors from the beginning of time have not disappeared. They have become the game that lives in the forest, but their ghosts also continue to exist. They still have their animal names but are now invisible beings. They have transformed themselves into *xapiri*, who are immortal. Even when the *xawara* epidemic tries to burn or devour them, their mirrors always dawn again. They are true elders. They can never disappear (Kopenawa & Albert, 2013, p. 61).

That we could simply for ourselves judge that the few peoples Schelling give the distinction of being actual peoples have no exclusive claim to a *system of gods* is not a sufficient solution to our problem. Certainly, the conceptual parallel between the Philosophy of Mythology and Yanomami cosmology can be argued for, but such comparisons usually result in the reduction of the otherness of entirely separate experience of thought into the philosophical system with which we wish to compare it. Condemning Schelling's refusal of humanity to Amerindian peoples should be a moral imperative, but it remains to be understood in what basis Schelling's distinction is being made. Our investigations aim to clarify some of the underlying problems with Schelling's position to further the question of possible productive philosophy of mythology that would serve as a proper instrument to understand traditions separate from Western thought in their own terms, not based on a previously elaborate conceptual scheme, but by investigating the very formation of the emergence of the consciousness of divinity, as given in a people's cosmology as a testimony of how thought experience itself.

The relationship between the polytheistic and monotheistic moments of mythology drives what is to be one of the central questions of the philosophy of mythology, namely *how do peoples emerge as singular spiritual unities?* The answer itself should be mythological. The spiritual lives of the peoples reveal themselves as the remembrance of a previous harmonious state, before the differentiation, although not the remembrance of a fully revealed consciousness of God or the absolute itself. Schelling's examination of the history of the self-consciousness of peoples in his philosophy of mythology will allow him to recover in his mature work the conflict between nature and spirit to which he dedicated his youth. This conflict will no longer be thought of in terms of the possibility of a system of knowledge, erected in such a way that reason can justify itself as its own foundation, but already pointing to the fundamental questions of contemporary philosophy about historicity and finitude.

Conclusion: Schelling's theory of potencies

Schelling's late ontology, of which the Philosophy of Mythology is an essential part, tries to propose a system to understanding thought in relation to the concrete processes of organic nature and history. One of its fundamental assumptions is acknowledging the coming of being of all things, whose essences could not be thought of as fixed in eternity. The factual existence of that that has come into being should be the beginning of philosophy, and his late critique of Idealist impetus of his and his former colleague's youth means to abandon the self-conscious subject as the beginning of philosophical inquiry in and of itself. The self-determining consciousness is absolutely necessary to comprehension, and to itself, it is the first thing that is, i.e., that is known to the subject precisely as the act of self-determination as the paradigm of synthesis in general. The affirmation of the ideality of absolute synthesis will not, however, be enough for Schelling; it will be necessary to find the possibility of the reality of the synthesis between real and ideal, subject and object: the realisation of the philosophical project, which Schelling proposes, is to be found not in the realm of ideas exclusively, but should assume the debt that self-consciousness owes to the 'pre-predicative' character of existence. The affirmation of existence as opposed to the idea finds in the Philosophy of Mythology a complex demonstration of Schelling's late ontological project to understand how thought can mediate the passage from the mere existent being, wholly independent of a knowing subject, to the idea. The core assumption of a god-positing consciousness as the beginning not only of mythological thought, but of thought in general, is an attempt to answer the question previously stated in his middle period works, the *Freiheitsschrift* of 1809 and the unfinished *Weltalter* fragments of 1810-13 of an irrational 'Ground' in opposition to God himself, an opposition from which ultimately all beings emerge. The ontological acknowledgement of this beginning and the necessity to resolve on its terms the relationship of essence and existence drives Schelling to develop what he calls a theory of potencies (*die Potenzlehre*), replacing abstract logic with a different form of thinking that would account for a coming into being of Being itself in a primordial movement that is prior to conceptual determination, i.e., "[...] a radical temporalization of thought and being, an innovation that culminates in the placement of temporal (or quasi-temporal) determinates 'prior' to those of essence and even of logic" (Beach, 1994, p. 111)⁴.

The driving force of Schelling's late ontology is the idea of this prior realm of thought as potentiality for being, what he calls *das Seynkönnende*. The process of coming into being is thought of as a complex operation of activity, negativity, production and retraction, bringing the schema of temporality into the very idea of the eternal, in his attempt to apprehend the very passage from essence into existence. According to Jankélévitch (2005, p. 270), Schelling believes in the "[...] majesty of original consciousness [...]" but rejects emanatism, i.e., the concept of creation as an unwilled, necessary, and spontaneous outflow from a primary, infinite, and unchanged substance. This consciousness, which is neither atheistic nor truly monotheistic, can be called theistic to evoke "[...] an attitude rather than knowledge". It resembles the possible and the ground, which are neither existence nor nothingness. The potentiality for being represents the totality of the real, but we must also say that the real is something more, as it is first possible and then exists. In a sense, that means, for Schelling, describing the process in which God itself comes into being and contains that which opposes it.

But God - according to his concept he is the potentiality for being, not in order to be that which exists according to him (according to the potentiality for being) (i.e. that which blindly exists), but in order not to be, in order to have

⁴ Markus Gabriel (2006) compares Schelling's Project with that of Heidegger's, both "[...] directed against the scientific view of the world, whose concept of objectivity tends to be incompatible with the existence of observers, whose observation cannot be made comprehensible without the existential of meaningfulness" (Gabriel, 2006, p. 31). According to Gabriel, Schelling and Heidegger both recognize that the scientific worldview tends to exclude the human presence from the world, which cannot truly be comprehended without it. By doing so, Schelling provides modern consciousness with evidence of its origins in mythological consciousness.

this Being in itself as a mere possibility, as a mere ground (what is only ground is always itself not existing) as the mere beginning of his being (SW XII, 42).

That the *Potenzlehre* is the speculative core of the Philosophy of Mythology, which is ultimately a propaedeutic to the subsequent Philosophy of Revelation, indicates the importance of Schelling's project. The mythological consciousness is not an example, an applied case of the philosopher's method, but the realisation of conscious thought, in which the differentiation and synthesis of the real and the ideal are produced, prior to any knowledge or poetry, prior to language itself; it is ultimately the realisation of the symbolic life of spirit and nature. The positing of Being – the *ontonomy* – as the productive synthesis that determines that which is, has its ground in the consciousness of divinity – the *theonomy*; “*The Universe is not a system, but a history*; that is why there is a Philosophy of Mythology and of Revelation” (Jankélévitch, 2005, p. 3). According to Gabriel (2006, p. 235 –, “If it is now possible to show that the existent itself appears to consciousness mostly and initially as the gods (mythology) and finally as the one God (revelation), it is also proven that ontonomous consciousness is originally theonomous.” The question remains, however, if this process must be understood as unique, in the sense that it has an unavoidable, necessary *telos* that Schelling can only intuit as revelation. A further path towards investigating the productive possibility of a philosophy of mythology should contend with the limitations of Schelling's assumptions, and ask if the thesis of the consciousness of divinity as the ground for the consciousness of being is a sufficient point of departure to address the authentic, singular cosmologies of each people as a potential realisation of a distinct process of the emergence of consciousness, whose commonality lies not in the presupposition of ‘relative monotheism’, but in the fundamental theonomical character of consciousness.

We hope that the confrontation with Amazonian cosmologies, as well as prompting the necessary criticism of the limitations and mistaken presuppositions of Schelling's philosophy, can also show the limits of this work to reveal what is productive in it. We are interested in what this means as a moment in the natural formation of consciousness, and how it indicates that the importance of this consciousness is the remembrance of a spiritual crisis marking the transition from unity to separation, from the formless ground to the multiplicity of *das Seynkönnendes*, of possibilities and modes of being that constitute the innumerable ways we inhabit the world.

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