

The philosophy of nature as a springboard into social realism

About Ibsen's *Emperor and Galilean* and a post-secular interpretation of the drama by Hilda Hellwig

Friedrich von Schelling (1775–1854) was a significant cultural influence when Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906) lived in Germany in the 1850s. However, because of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, which stood out as irreconcilable with the scientific philosophy of the positivists, Schelling came to be more and more neglected after the mid-nineteenth century. His pronounced idealism, belief in God, and metaphysical comments were branded 'old-fashioned' soon after his death. But Schelling's ideas were still there and many thinkers were curious about them. Søren Kirkegaard (1813–55) was one of them. Today, Schelling is mentioned in contexts where ideas about 'mindfulness' are of importance. In 1979 Jon Kabat-Zinn, with a PhD in molecular biology, founded a clinic for Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), and his programme became a course at the University of Massachusetts Medical School (Kabat-Zinn 1982). Although originally articulated as an element of Buddhism, it is pointed out by committed practitioners that there is nothing inherently religious about mindfulness. It is however about integrating the healing aspects of Buddhist meditation practices with the concept of psychological awareness and healing. To a high degree in Western countries, psychotherapists have adapted and developed mindfulness techniques (Kabat-Zinn *et al.* 1985, Bishop *et al.* 2004).

When it comes to metaphysics, Schelling's influence on the religious ideas that were accepted by Ibsen was never acknowledged. Ibsen is often studied from a Hegelian perspective. This text will throw some light upon Schelling as a source of inspiration for Ibsen and his milieu. Is it so, that Schelling's ideas not until our 'post-secular' epoch have come into their own? Ibsen producers and actors are familiar with 'New World Mindfulness' and the history of mindfulness in the West, from the 'American Founding Fathers', Henry David Thoreau (1817–62) and Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–82), up to present-day

leaders in the field, such as Jon Kabat-Zinn. That Emerson was influenced by Schelling is a well-known fact.

In this 'POST-ERA', with post-empiricists proclaiming the unavailability of absolutely certain knowledge, we are better able to appreciate Schelling's importance than the empiricists did. *Naturphilosophie* is not seen as presenting an obstacle to scientific truth any longer. Now when serious attention is being paid to the role of all aspects of language in scientific discovery, the rigid division between the empirical and the speculative is broken down. Well, the crisis of reason is hardly a new philosophical topic, it was the vital point in the 'Pantheism controversy' which began in 1783. Nihilism was a lurking danger, and Spinozism, that was seen as reducing our understanding of what we are to what science can tell us on the basis of casual laws, was also presenting a threat (cf. Bowie 1993). When Heidegger studied Schelling, he realised that the philosophical debate caused by F. H. Jacobi had an enormous influence on the development of German Idealism. Jacobi's thesis, that speculative metaphysics leads to 'nihilism', became a challenge for the entire Idealistic-Romantic school, and creating a 'system' of 'Being' which was not nihilistic became a task for Hegel. But it was Schelling's ambition to penetrate the nature of Being that later fascinated Heidegger, and his high opinion of Schelling's work was rather unusual at the time (Hedley 2000: 143–5).

Great playwrights

One of the greatest German dramatists of the mid-nineteenth century was Friedrich Hebbel (1813–63), born at Wesselburen in Holstein. In his early twenties, Hebbel wanted to hear Schelling, who lectured in Munich. The journey to Munich was made by foot and he reached the city in September 1836, remaining there until March 1839. Hebbel's two and a half years in Munich were years of solitude, illness, and battles against despair, but they were also the finishing school of his personality. He heard the lectures of Schelling at the university, and his own reading began to suggest to him innumerable subjects for tragedies, such as Napoleon, Alexander the Great, Julian the Apostate, and the Maid of Orleans, in whom Hebbel saw the destiny of mankind typified. A couple of years later, in 1842–3, he spent the winter in Copenhagen, where the Danish-German dramatist Adam Oehlenschläger (1779–1850) helped him (Howard 2004). In the summer of 1802, Oehlenschläger liked the company of the young Norwegian philosopher Henrik Steffens (1773–1845), who then came back to Copenhagen after a long visit in Germany, as a friend of

Schelling, full of new romantic ideas. Thereafter, Friedrich Schelling's philosophy was interpreted in Denmark by Henrik Steffens.

Hebbel and Ibsen were already being compared in 1896 (Berg 1896: 258–73), and in 1908, Josef Wiehr wrote about the close points of similarity between Ibsen and Hebbel, and, of course, Ibsen was very influenced by Hebbel, who was a great favourite (Wiehr 2010). Ibsen was affected by Hebbel to such a high degree, that in 1852, when he read *Das moderne Drama* by Hermann Hettner (1821–82), he saw a lot of Hebbel in Hettner. In fact, it was thanks to Hebbel, that Hettner, a professor in the history of art, learned about the special character dramas, dramatic guilt, and how to give dramatised conflicts depth. It was from Hebbel that Hettner got the idea of a synthesis: to mix classical antiquity with Shakespearian dramas. Hebbel's special talent for developing different productions, tragedies of supra-individual kinds, was part of the nature of the mature artist, and the influence on Hettner's reasoning was immense (Lorenz 1932: 117).

So, in the early 1850s Ibsen attempted to carry on the tradition of Hebbel, and during a study tour of Copenhagen and Dresden in 1852, he came across Hettner's dramaturgical work, newly released in Germany. This programmatic treatise for a new topical theatre deeply affected Ibsen's development as a dramatist. But at the same time, Ibsen was influenced by Kierkegaard. The poetic dimension of aesthetics was not exclusively about the symbolic-allegorical divide. Ibsen drew on a different model altogether, which derived from Kierkegaard's radical re-consideration of the Incarnation and his concomitant theory of indirect communication. This Kierkegaardian paradigm perhaps offers a means of understanding producer Hilda Hellwig's interest in the incarnation/resurrection theme, showing that modernism is not merely a continuation of either the Romantic or Realist traditions. When she produced Kierkegaard's *Either/Or (Enten – Eller)* at Teater Aurora in 1997, Hellwig was investigating 'fringe areas', as 'resurrection but no Paradise, and vice versa' (private email with Hellwig 30.3.2011 and 8.4.2011).¹

In October 1841 Kierkegaard went to Berlin, where he attended Friedrich Schelling's lectures. In Berlin for four months, Kierkegaard was very productive: while also taking five courses, he wrote *Either/Or* and *Two Upbuilding Discourses (To opbyggelige Taler)*. Full of Schelling, Kierkegaard returned to

1 Parts of *Enten – Eller* were included in the play by Kierkegaard with the title *Hør, Hør, Mozarts 'Don Juan'* that was staged at Det Kongelige Teater in Copenhagen 1968–9. Ingmar Simonsson translated the book into a play for Theatre Aurora in 1986, with the Swedish title *Antingen – eller*.

Denmark and began a period of astounding literary productivity. At the same time, in 1844, Ibsen moved to Grimstad and stayed there until 1850. He was in his early twenties and wrote his first drama: *Catiline (Catilina)*.² When in 1875 Ibsen produced a second edition, Georg Brandes reviewed it, and underlined the fact, that the Oehlenschläger style of diction had been transformed into a style specific to Ibsen (Brandes 2007: 264–5).

The Emperor Julian

Classical antiquity and the tragic Emperor Julian fascinated Ibsen. In 1873, Ibsen published the drama which he himself regarded as his ‘main work’, or masterpiece: *Emperor and Galilean (Kejser og Galilæer)*.³ ‘It was a vast historical canvas which he unfolded here, much broader than any of his earlier dramas. Years of painstaking labour, including a close study of the historical sources, went into this evocation of characters and events from a distant past: the Roman Empire of the fourth century AD, and the last twelve years of the life of Julian the Apostate.’ (Hemmer 1994.) When Henrik Ibsen was considering the idea of writing a play about Emperor Julian (332–363), he was influenced by the work of Eduard Gerhard, who between 1863 and 1865 published his research on the site of the Great Mysteries of Eleusis. The celebrations of the *Magna Mater* thus became known to Ibsen when he came to Rome in 1864, to do research into the life of Emperor Julian, with the aim of writing a play. The Homeric Hymn to Demeter explains the Eleusinian Mysteries, both in terms of the reunion of the two goddesses, and as a result of the failure of the attempt to immortalise Demophoon, King Keleos of Eleusis’ son. When Demeter tried to burn Demophoon’s immortal spirit away, she was unable to complete the ritual, because Metaneira (the boy’s mother) interfered with the process. According to Mircea Eliade, Demeter did not manage to transform a man into a god (Eliade 1978: 291). Therefore, according to the myth, the initiate into the Eleusinian Mysteries did not obtain immortality. However, through the initiation, the human condition was modified. The few ancient texts that refer directly to the Mysteries emphasise the postmortem bliss of

2 *Catiline* had the production title *Catilina* on the very first occasion that it was staged. The producer Ludvig Josephson presented the play in Swedish, at Nya Teatern in Stockholm, on December 3, 1881.

3 With the production title *Kaiser und Galiläer* opened on February 27, 1896, staged by Akadmischer Studentenverein in Kaimischer Konzertsaal, Munich, Germany.

the initiated: often mentioned are Pindar, Sophocles and Didot (cf. Wasson *et al.* 1998: 87; Hofmann 1997: 31–40). The Eleusinian Mysteries ‘can be regarded as a religious system that complemented the Olympian religion and the public cults without, however, opposing the traditional religious institutions of the city. The chief contribution of Eleusis was soteriological in nature, and that is why the Mysteries were accepted and very soon patronised by Athens.’ (Eliade 1978: 299.) As Christianity gained in popularity in the fourth and fifth centuries, Eleusis’ prestige began to fade. Julian was the last emperor to be initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries.

The drama

The idea of resurrection was important when Ibsen was planning the new drama, and ‘the play *Emperor and Galilean* depicts a dilemma which arises because of the irreconcilable contrasts between the pagan idea of spiritual resurrection. . . and the theological idea demonstrated with the Christian creed of the resurrection of the flesh’ (Ólafsson 2008: 22).

In my study of a special production of this particular Ibsen drama, presented in Bergen, Norway, from 24 May to 9 June 2000, by the very competent producer Hilda Hellwig, I try to focus on Hellwig’s interpretation and understanding of Ibsen’s view, and his reading of Julian, and the spirit of the times, in the middle of the fourth century. But I concentrate on a specific event, a sort of ‘postliminal rite’ which occurs when Julian has a moment before been initiated into something secret, and the crucified Jesus Christ is present. These symbolic acts, being expressed at several levels, are merged into a dramatic scene that is full to bursting with the ‘paschal mystery’, as it is seen in trinitarian theology.

The transition period that is portrayed in the play is a time of unrest and upheaval, and in her production, Hilda Hellwig manages to make Ibsen an analyst not only of his own times, but also of the beginning of the twenty-first century. All well-produced, well-organised and concentrated. As the reviewer Hans Rossiné wrote after the première:

The producer Hilda Hellwig has trimmed down the almost twelve hour long drama to five hours, without losing the all-round effect that comes with the broad perspective, or the enthralling changes of direction that come with the many transitional stages; neither on the inner plane, nor on the outer, are there any pauses to lessen the impact. The production is a

delight; rough and brutal, severe and austere, and visually very well-realised. Whenever the threat of stagnation looms, Hellwig slips a tonal effect or some kind of sound into the play; changes the volume, or arranges the actors and scenic settings in an expressive way, all plastic, humorous, chic and stylish. Hellwig's arrangements give the production vitality throughout its five hours' duration. (Rossiné 2000.)

Over and over again, the *Emperor and Galilean* has been interpreted by editors and reviewers as a 'typically Hegelian' play. Halvdan Koht, who published a *Life of Ibsen* in 1971, 'points out that the idea of gradual evolution of knowledge, manifested in the concept of the third empire, entered quite naturally into Hegelian dialectics, which seeks to reconcile opposites in a higher unity' (Ólafsson 2008: 58). Hegel might very well be the lodestar for any Hegelian scholar who analyses all the Ibsen plays that belong to the so called 'Realist Cycle', that is the plays from *Pillars of Society* (*Samfundets Støtter*, 1877) to



Den Nationale Scene is the oldest stage still functioning as a great theatre in Norway. It was inaugurated in 1850, then called 'Det Norske Theater i Bergen'. The founder was Ole Bull, a world famous violinist and composer. Bjørnsterne Bjørnson and Henrik Ibsen were both very active here, Bjørnson as theatrical manager and Ibsen as playwright, dramaturge and assistant producer. Today, Den Nationale Scene is the most important theatrical stage outside Oslo. The 3.5 metre high statue of Ibsen, located in front of the theatre, was made by Nils Raa in 1981. http://v6.cache1.c.bigcache.googleapis.com/static.panoramio.com/photos/original/40147836.jpg?redirect_counter=1.

When We Dead Awaken (*Når vi døde vågner*, 1899), labelled so by Brian Johnston, who argued that the twelve plays constitute a single, tripartite cycle whose subject is modern humanity undergoing (in Hegelian terms), a great journey of spiritual recollection (Johnston 1992).

Schelling

I do not argue against any of these interpretations, but why has Schelling been forgotten? Ibsen was certainly not well up on Hegel's philosophy, in any profound way. He knew that Hegel saw history from the widest possible perspective: a world-historical view, and in a 'Hegelian way' Ibsen also viewed history as a process of self-realisation, but it was through Georg Brandes and other Danish thinkers that he got Hegel served in sufficiently heavy portions. Ibsen was not deeply penetrating Hegel's grandiose metaphysical system.

Throughout his works Ibsen employs certain fundamental thematic structures, which appear in various forms. One of these is linked to variations on the problems of the liberal dilemma and idealism, and the theme appears in Ibsen's first play *Catiline*—acted in Roman dress—which is based on the revolution of 1848. *Emperor and Galilean* was the last of Ibsen's history plays; from then on he became preoccupied with contemporary issues and addressed these within a modern framework (Rønning 1997: 171–201).

Schelling had opened up the possibility of a modern hermeneutic view of nature that did not restrict nature's significance to what could be established about it in scientific terms. It is clear, that Schelling's critique of Hegelian idealism influenced both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, and the latter was embraced by Brandes, who in many ways influenced Ibsen. The playwright realised that no social order can succeed unless it founds itself as carefully upon man's instincts and needs as it does upon the laws that man has discovered in nature (Smith 1911: 147–57).

In Hellwig's production, the years between 351 and 363 symbolize the 'Ages of the World'. Portions of the scenery are Roman, but the people in Athens are dressed in clothes from the 1920s, and there are machine-guns, and television cameras, so that there are all ages in one.

Between 1809 and 1827 Schelling was developing a philosophy of the Ages of the World (*Weltalter*, Schelling 2002). In broad outline, Schelling insisted that there must be that against which freedom can be manifest—a being which is not free and is therefore necessitated—for it to be meaningful freedom at all. The theory is based on the antagonisms between opposing forces

which constitute the 'Ages of the World', past, present, and future. He argued that the world whose origins the *Weltalter* wishes to understand must entail the same conflicting forces which still act, though not necessarily in the same form, in this world, of which the mind is an aspect: poured from the source of things and the same as the source, the human soul has a co-knowledge/con-science (*Mitwissenschaft*) of creation. Schelling suggests that there are two principles in us: an unconscious, dark principle and a conscious principle, which must yet in some way be identical. The same structure applies to what Schelling means by God. As that which makes the world intelligible, God relates to the ground in such a way that the 'real', which takes the form of material nature, is 'in God' but is not God seen absolutely, that is insofar as He exists; for it is only the ground of His existence, it is nature in God, an essence which is inseparable from God, but different from Him. The point is that God would be just some kind of inarticulate, static One if it were not the case that He transcends all. Without opposition, Schelling argues, there is no life and no sense of development, which are the highest aspects of reality (Schelling 2002, Bowie 2010).

One aspect of being, the dark force, which he sometimes terms 'gravity', is contractive, the other expansive, which he terms 'light'. Dynamic processes are the result of the interchange between these ultimately identical forces. If they were wholly separate there would either be no manifest universe, because contraction would dominate, or the universe would dissipate at infinite speed because expansion would dominate. The result would be the same: there would not be a world. If something is to be as something, it must both be pronominal and have a relationship to what it is not (in order to be determinate). This brings it into the realm of predication by taking it beyond itself. In the *Weltalter* the One comes into conflict with itself and the two forces constantly vie with each other. Differences must, however, be grounded in unity, as otherwise they could not be manifest at all as differences. The ground is now increasingly regarded as the source of the transitory nature of everything particular, and less and less as the source of tranquil insight into how we can be reconciled to finite existence. The mood of the *Weltalter* is summed up in Schelling's reference to the 'veil of melancholy which is spread over the whole of nature, the deep indestructible melancholy of all life' (Bowie 1997: 199). The source of this melancholy is that everything finite must 'go to ground' and that we are aware of this (Voegelin 1989–2009).⁴

4 CW 25 (HPI-VIII), The Last Orientation Chapter 2, Schelling § 6 Promethean Existence, pp. 220–2.

In *Emperor and Galilean* Ibsen contemplates the idea of resurrection and how to respond to that concept. . .constantly reminding the audience of the importance of spiritual awareness, of which the playwright obviously thinks that a perspective on the idea of resurrection is an inevitable part (Ólafsson 2008: 66).

Schelling has Jesus Christ as a mediator, as an ‘intermediary being,’ since Christ is outside God by virtue of his eternal humanity, outside and independent of the human by virtue of his divinity. For Schelling, Christ is neither divine, nor human, but something in between. Schelling argues that Christ’s resurrection is proof of the irrevocability of the Incarnation.

If the notion of paganism had not been abstracted from public religion, one would long ago have realised how paganism and Christianity were together all along and how the latter emerged from the former only by making the mystery cults public—a truth that can be deduced historically from most of the Christian customs, their symbolic rituals and initiations, which were obvious imitations of those prevailing in the mystery cults (Schelling 2010: 52).

According to Schelling’s philosophy, nature is a ‘spirit-degree’/‘degree of spirit’, with a soul, expressing and manifesting the striving Will of the World (*världs viljan*). In the drama produced by Hellwig, the theurg Maximus has a revelation and is told that Julian is destined to be the instrument of the Will of the World. This ‘tool-election’ puts ideas into the head of Julian; he has visions of ‘the Third Empire’ on earth, a divine world in the here and now, in which Hellenism and Christianity, God and Emperor, faith and doubt, soul and body are being united into One. In Ibsen’s text, Julian dies onstage, but the play ends with a declaration that he will return, reincarnated, to found the prophesied ‘Third Empire’ (cf. Sage 2006).⁵

The God-images of the drama

Who was Maximus then, in history? He was a student of Iamblichus (d. 330), who in turn was a student of Porphyry. Iamblichus made a tripartite division of Soul, positing a cosmic or All-Soul, and two lesser souls, corresponding to

5 Paraphrases in Hitler’s recorded conversation indicated knowledge of the drama.

the rational and irrational faculties, respectively. This idea led Iamblichus to posit an array of intermediate spiritual beings between the lower souls and the intelligible realm—daemons, the souls of heroes, and angels of all sorts. By placing so much distance between the earthly soul and the intelligible realm, Iamblichus made it difficult for Julian to gain an intuitive knowledge of the higher Soul, although he insisted that everyone possesses such knowledge, coupled with an innate desire for the Good. Iamblichus established the practice of theurgy, which he insisted does not draw the gods down to man, but rather renders humankind (Fowden 1986: 133). What is the sign of the presence of a god or an angel, asks Iamblichus, then: ‘I declare that their manifestations are in accordance with their true natures, their potentialities and activities. For as they are, so they appear to those invoking them. . .’ (Iamblichus 2003: 87.)

Emperor Julian considered himself to be an integral part of a divine salvific movement. He believed in his personal pre-existence and that his present condition was really a living incarnation brought about by the power of King Helios. Julian seems to have been convinced that he, like the minor deities, had been endowed with qualities that would enable him to perform the mission essentially of being an effective rival of the false god of the Galileans.

In Asia Minor, where Julian spent many years of education, there was a phenomenon that Hellwig evokes, when she puts Julian together with angels and Christ. The most influential sect throughout much of central Anatolia in the fourth century was called ‘the Novatian’, to whom Easter was of the greatest importance, celebrated to coincide with the Passover. Those Phrygian Christians who celebrated Jewish festivals were problematic to several potentates of the Church Council. In a Novatian inscription, you can read ‘I shall sing a hymn for the first angel, who is Jesus Christ’, ‘precisely reflecting the religious environment of third and fourth century Lycaonia. It treated Christ not as a being who encroached on the uniqueness of God, but as the first of His angels.’ (Mitchell 1999: 123.)

Emperor Constantine was a worshipper of Apollo, the sun-god, but via a vision of a solar halo (which he took to resemble a cross), he converted to Christianity, and Julian worshipped Helios. ‘The cult of Theos Hypsistos was palpably linked by many followers with worship of the sun’ (Mitchell 1999: 124). In the area in which Julian lived, Helios and Zeus were inveterate pagan gods, according to Christians.

The cult of Zeus Hypsistos in Greece and Macedonia surely developed from local roots. . .[but] [t]he concept of a highest god and his angels is likely to have evolved independently in the unhellenized communities of the interior Asia Minor. . .it drew on an indigenous tradition which favoured both monotheism and an ascetic religious morality. (Mitchell 1999: 126.)

A quasi-monotheistic worship was successful:

The notion of a supreme and abstract deity, supported by lesser divine beings. . .found a perfect expository partner in Neoplatonic philosophy. This enabled a popular cult to evolve into a highly sophisticated theological system, which appealed to intellectuals and the educated elite as well as to ordinary people. (Mitchell 1999: 127.)

Hypsistarians, the worshippers of the Hypsistos, the 'Most High God', belonged to various groups, mostly in Asia Minor (Cappadocia, Bithynia and Pontus), from 200 BC to about AD 400. 'Hypsianistai' and 'Hypsianoï' first occur in Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 329–89/90), and 'Hypsistianoi' appears about 374 in a text by Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–95). A great number of votive tablets, inscriptions and oracles of Didyma and Klaros establish beyond doubt that the cult of the Hypsistos, often with the addition of Zeus or Attis, or Theos, was widespread around the Bosphorus. Klaros often delivered her prophecies in a dark crypt-like *adyton* under the Temple of Apollo, reminiscent of the pit in which Hellwig put Maximus during the event that I will focus on. In Acts 16:17 you have: 'these men are servants of the most high God', and the Hypsistarians mentioned were then connected to the oracle of the pythonissa at Philippi (Arendzen 2011).

Both Hypsistarian worship and magical practice involve the lighting of lamps, while the Magical Papyri, the Chaldean Revelations, and the prophecies delivered by late antique oracles often suggest that the first principle is fiery, or they identify it with the sun. Admittedly this is a supra-mundane sun, as in Julian's Hymn to King Helios. (Athanassiadi & Frede 1999: 18.)

In Hellwig's production, each religious hero has a blood-stained handkerchief wrapped around his head, but this symbol of some kind of belonging, a marker of intellectual fellowship, indicating that the wearer has been initiated into

a mystery cult, can also be interpreted as a sign of mortality. Merely human, not divine! In the Gospel of John (20:6–9), the immortal, divine One, has his head cloth wrapped up and put away, because he is coming back from the dead.

Even if Ibsen was fascinated by Neo-Platonism, he was stuck in his trinitarian belief. The fact that he decided to have his funeral in the Holy Trinity Church (Trefoldighetskirken), does more than merely indicate that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, with three hypostases in one divine Being (*Ousia*), was Ibsen's belief, after all. Whatever attributes and power 'God the Father' has, 'God the Son' and 'God the Holy Spirit' also have power. Thus, 'God the Son' and 'God the Holy Spirit' are also eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent, infinitely wise, infinitely holy, infinitely loving, omniscient. The doctrine developed from the biblical language used in New Testament passages and took substantially its present form after Emperor Julian's death, by the end of the fourth century, as a result of controversies concerning the proper sense in which to apply to God and Christ terms such as 'person', 'nature', 'essence', and 'substance'.

Toril Moi (2006) sees the *Emperor and Galilean* as a play that looks ahead, indicating progress, a step into modernity. But there is, in Hellwig's interpretation, another future taking us beyond modernity. An aesthetically grounded idealism that asserts the progressive unity of ego and non-ego, humanity and nature, God and the world—a very good example of a post-secular event. This implies that Schelling is teaching Hebbel, and in the great play *Emperor and Galilean*, the pantheism of Schelling (at his time, spoken of as 'pantheism') becomes a trinitarian pantheism, thanks to Hilda Hellwig's *Fingerspitzengefühl* and ability to interpret Ibsen's subtext better than any director previously has done. She has discovered the process philosophy that carries a process theology, which can be labelled pantheism, expressed in many ways, sometimes just hinted at in a frame story, through the interplay between Ibsen himself and his protagonist. Both the young and the old Ibsen come down from heaven (on ropes that lowered the actors) to follow the drama, symbolising the active One, taking part in the world that is a component of God, who is more than the world. According to Schelling, God's self-actualisation requires free human action. The procession of things from God is God's self-revelation. But God can only reveal himself in creatures who resemble him, in free, self-activating beings (Schelling 1936).

World history is God's history, and it is redemptive history. Contrary to Hegel, Schelling denies that philosophy can dispel the mystery of God, which is rooted in divine–human freedom. Ibsen, who through Hellwig combines

trinitarian panentheism with human freedom in a non-deterministic view of history, reflects more of Schelling than Hegel.

I will focus on 'the crucified God', who plays an important role in the plot of the play that is under scrutiny here. Schelling said something that Jürgen Moltmann emphasises: 'Every being can be revealed only in its opposite. Love only in hatred, unity only in conflict.' (Moltmann 1974: 27.) To Christians at the end of Julian's reign, God was revealed as God in his opposite, it was about godlessness and abandonment by God. In concrete terms, God was revealed on the cross of the Christ who was abandoned by God. Through the cross on stage in Bergen, which Christ freely walks away from, we realise that a dialectical exposition of the crucifixion is complex. The relation between God and Jesus on the cross is not between the immutable, transcendent God and the human nature of Jesus, but within God. What happened on the cross is an event between God and God. The drama presents a deep division in God himself, insofar as God abandoned God and contradicted himself, and also presents at the same time a unity in God, insofar as God was at one with God and corresponded to himself. This dialectical division and reconciliation within God is how the persons of the Trinity become who they are. These persons constitute themselves in their relationship with each other. The Father and the Son constitute one another in their mutual, suffering love. The Son suffers in his love being forsaken by the Father as he dies. The Father suffers in his love the grief of the death of the Son. The Spirit is the spirit of love between the Father and the Son. Thus the Trinity is actualised on the cross. Without the cross there would be no Trinity (cf. Moltmann 1974). This is not a Hegelian way of thinking. Hegel posits the negation of the Father in the incarnation of the Son and then the negation of the Son in the crucifixion. Both Father and Son are dialectically transformed into the Spirit that lives in the Church and Christendom.

To Ibsen, God is an event, he is not a heavenly person or a moral authority. A free Christian person prays in God, in this event, through the Son to the Father in the Spirit. He participates in the event of God. Ibsen affirms God and human freedom, but rejects the traditional view of God. God is not only other-wordly but also this-wordly, he is not only God, but also man; he is not only rule, authority and law, but the event of suffering, liberating love. Here we have process theology, since Ibsen recognises two divine natures: God both transcends the world and is immanent in history, God and humans participate in a common history. In the dialectical tradition that was popular when Ibsen wrote the play, an idea about the crucified God can use an implicit panentheism. If we think of the Trinity as a dialectical event, indeed

as the event of the cross and then as eschatologically open history, we can understand that Ibsen saw Julian as participating in the trinitarian process of God's history. There is a divine pathos, as presented by Makrina: God's feeling our feelings and suffering our pain. Maximus says, that the world-will shall answer for Julian's soul. The more history progresses, the more God becomes One. Since divine unification involves not only the three persons but also creation, Ibsen's trinitarianism is panentheistic as well as eschatological. God's full self-unity depends upon his complete communion with creation. Ibsen does not cross the border, in his belief, but he lets Julian show signs of tritheism, affirming three divine beings without ontological unity. Ibsen adopts an ontology of persons that is social: personal existence is essentially communal and developmental. Surveying the concepts of the divine person in the history of trinitarian theology, he discovered in Hegel the view that he looked for. The substantial understanding of person (Boethius) and the relational understanding of person (Augustine) was now expanded by the historical understanding of person (Hegel). The persons do not merely 'exist' in their relations, they also realise themselves in one another by virtue of self-surrendering love. As persons in this sense, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit constitute One God. But it was not Ibsen's mission to provide a strong ontological account of essential, divine unity. Hegel's social ontology implies that persons are essentially interdependent and that communities are ontological units that are more than aggregates of individuals. As Schelling knew, Hegel's analysis does not make social units anything other than communities of persons. A family is ontologically real, but even a perfect family unit is not an analogy for the oneness of God. Through the words of Makrina, the entire history and destiny of the world became included in the life of the Trinity. Ibsen gives a hint through Julian. Like Schelling and the Neo-Platonic tradition, Ibsen views history as the means by which God actualises and finally transcends the primordial non-being inherent in himself. Ibsen does not, like Hegel, assimilate Christianity into philosophy. When lecturing in Berlin in 1831, Hegel asserted that the immanent Trinity precedes history. He called it the kingdom of the Father, and saw history in terms of the kingdom of the Son that would be reconciled to the kingdom of the Father in and through the kingdom of the Spirit. Thus, Hegel affirms that the suffering and death of Jesus enter eternally into the life of the Trinity. Otherness, the negative, is known to be a moment of the divine nature itself. The dialectics of Hegel constrains God's actions. From a post-secular perspective, God must be free to be God. Yet this freedom constitutes itself in love. Beyond being and non-being, the Trinity nonetheless freely ties itself to what it has created. It does

so because it is love: among other things, the doctrine of the Trinity means that God's very act of being is social. The divine persons exist as relations, not subjects, the theology of history therefore has to be rejected. Discussions around the doctrine are mere hairsplitting (Herrick 2006; Moltmann 1977: 64). But according to Kevin Hart, the Trinity is not offered to experience in the present moment. It offers itself, rather, as a trace that passes through those experiences that help bring on the Basileia (Hart 2003: 153–73).

Ibsen employed a trinitarian way of thinking, but could easily switch to tritheism, and through Hellwig it becomes clear: the primary goddess can equally well be called Hecate, and in her Persephone aspect she exemplifies the Greek idea of non-being while in her Demeter aspect she is the Hellenic form of the idea of the All-Mother. The idea of non-being in Greek religion forms the root-aspect of being (cf. Kerényi 1935). In the Eleusinian Mysteries the Kore and Demeter are connected, the daughter as a goddess originally independent of her mother is unthinkable, since there is a primordial identity of mother and daughter. Persephone's whole being is summed up in an incident that is at once the story of Demeter's own sufferings. The daughter's being is revealed like a flash in her mother's. The double-figure of Demeter and the Kore unfolds into three divinities: Hecate, Demeter, and Persephone. At the centre of Hecate's sphere of influence stands the moon. Karl Kerényi defined the world of Hecate as the lunar aspect of the Demeter world. Fertility and death are somehow related to those aspects of the world ruled by the moon. When Julian was initiated, it was in honour of Persephone, but at the same time in honour of Demeter, and Hecate too was operative. When Hellwig put Maximus in the underworld on stage, it was above all the underworldly Persephone, the Queen of the Dead, to whom the road of this initiation led. The head of Julian, the initiate, was wrapped in a blood-stained cloth, a symbol of darkness (brides in antiquity and those devoted to the Underworld were also veiled). The triad of the Mother, Daughter and the moon-goddess Hecate can be seen together on sacred monuments; the torch appears to be the attribute of each of them. The light-bringing torch is characteristic not only of Hecate, since it plays an important part in the Demeter and Persephone cult. Even outside the Homeric world, Hecate is a second Demeter (Rudloff 1999: 57–8; cf. Kerényi 1950). Besides her Kore quality, her affinity with the moon and with a primitive world of ghosts, a sort of motherliness also pertains to the idea of Hecate. It is not the classical, nor still later, Hecate that comes closest to the fundamental idea, but an original Demeter and Hecate in one person (Jung & Kerényi 1969: 133).

Finishing off

According to Schelling, mythology is a phenomenon which in its profundity, permanence, and universality is comparable only with Nature itself. Ibsen agreed with him on that: whether we look at trinitarian theology, or mythology, in the drama *Emperor and Galilean*, history counts; but we can anticipate the ‘social models’ of trinitarian theology that became part of ‘modernism’. Through this grand drama, Ibsen keeps pre-Hegelian German ideology alive. Ibsen took human acts of intellect and will as a way of explicating the mystery of the Trinity and the immanent processions.⁶

A characteristic feature of Hellwig’s production is a very strong emphasis on the personal, relational, and social aspect of being, as well as the ramifications of this for human beings, coupled with a rejection of any hint of an essentialist metaphysics that accords priority to categories of substance over categories of relation. In our post-secular era, we can experience a production in which the sheer mystery of the Trinity, as revealed in Jesus, is brought out: a profoundly inspired and highly evocative reflection on the Trinity as it is revealed in the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ.⁷ Ibsen (through Hellwig) explicates God’s being, through Makrina, in terms of the self-emptying, self-sacrificing, and intrinsically dynamic nature of love, as revealed in the paschal mystery.⁸ In this we can see a sophisticated critique of Augustinian-Thomistic trinitarian theology. In contrast to the social models, it is suddenly doxological. Faith is first of all an aesthetic act, it is a seeing or a beholding, before it is a believing and before it finds expression in praxis. The whole drama expresses the new religion that Schelling was aiming for, but it is not labelled as a religion.

Hilda Hellwig has demonstrated a drama in which different religions are very important, but everything is there to be contemplated, not served up in order to give something specific a plug. The frustration of doubt is handed over to the audience as a phenomenon to be pondered on here and now in

6 And there is black humour, as, analogous to Jesus’ ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’, Julian whines: ‘Oh, Helios, Helios, why didst thou betray me?’

7 The Paschal Mystery refers to the suffering (sometimes called the passion), death, resurrection, and glorification of Jesus Christ. The essence of the work the Father sent Jesus to do on earth is referred to as the Paschal Mystery. The word ‘paschal’ comes from a Hebrew word meaning ‘the passing over.’

8 ‘Den mildt gudfryktige Makrina (Stine Varvin) sier til Julian i en fin og bevegende scene: “Kristus er ikke død. Ditt hat til ham gjør at han lever, like meget som min kjærlighet til ham gjør det.” (Rossiné 2000.)

a positive way. Hellwig demonstrates an object lesson in mindfulness. Schelling thought, that out of the symbolic classical antiquity and the allegorical modernity, a new religion would sprout up. Christianity was not the goal of history, but a way there, its outer form should dissolve and disappear. After 200 years of secularisation, we might wonder if 'a new religion' is the religious phenomenon he was thinking of. In Schelling's mind, the new religion's most excellent quality would be that nature was reborn as a symbol



Trond Espen Seim, who is a well-known film actor, has a background in theatre (educated at Statens teaterhøgskole). While working at Den Nationale Scene in the year 2000, he was awarded the 'Hedda Prize', for his part as Julian in *Emperor and Galilean*. The prize has a very high prestige among stage people and in Norwegian theatrical/drama circles. Here we can see a cruciformed emperor. Photo by Jan Lundberg.

of the eternal unity, and in its traces a new, deeper symbolic art would appear, a synthesis built up on Greek nature symbolism and Christian modern 'infinite allegory'. With Schelling's philosophy of nature as a messenger, or maybe a 'harbinger', the mindfulness of Jon Kabat-Zinn *et consortes* has entered the stage. Schelling's philosophy of nature, particularly his intention to construct a programme which covers both nature and the intellectual in a single system and method, and restore nature as a central theme of philosophy, has been re-evaluated in the contemporary context. Each stage is a thesis that eventually runs into its own limitations, which triggers a self-transcendence to a new synthesis, which both negates and preserves its predecessor. Thus, spirit tries to know itself first through sensation, then perception, then impulse. At this point, spirit is still unselfconscious, thus Schelling refers to the whole of Nature as a 'slumbering spirit'.

Nature is a self-organising, dynamic system, but it is, according to Schelling, spirit slumbering because spirit has not yet become self-conscious. With the emergence of mind, spirit becomes self-conscious. Spirit seeks to know itself through symbols, concepts, and reason, and the result is that the universe begins to think about the universe, which produces the world of reason and, in particular, the world of conscious morals. Thus, says Schelling, where nature was objective spirit, mind is subjective spirit. In the world of mindfulness, spirit goes out of itself to produce objective nature, awakens to itself in subjective mind, and then recovers itself in pure, non-dual percep-

tion, where subject and object are one pure act of non-dual awareness that unifies both nature and mind in realised spirit (Wilber 2008).

A long drama by Ibsen is mindfulness, both to the actors and the spectators, because ‘wherever you go, there you are’. The practice of pantheist mindfulness can very well be what Schelling hoped for. When pantheists ‘take a walk in the woods’—they engage in fundamental spiritual devotion. By so doing they refresh themselves, and feel peace and joy in nature. Pantheists are engaged in the reality. There is no argument about ‘your beliefs vs. my beliefs’. They think that the practice of pantheist mindfulness enhances the relationship with the sacred that is the whole point of religion (Wood 2005). According to Schelling, nature is one of the stages of development by an autonomous, primary principle that is the Self. Nature exists because Self preliminarily was nature. In Ibsen’s poem, *On the Heights (På Vidderne)*, the main character of the poem needed time alone in the mountains to be able to decide what life to choose. Ibsen’s text is interpreted as being based on deep eco-philosophical thinking; Ibsen shares his joy and enthusiasm about life in the mountains. He promotes a simple, beautiful, and seductive life in nature (Elgvin 2009). The drama discussed in this text, *Emperor and Galilean*, was set up in 2000 at Den Nationale Scene (see picture above). Henrik Ibsen was one of the first writers-in-residence and art-directors of the theatre. From the end of May until the beginning of June, the most dazzling, flowery time of the year, with glowing mountains surrounding the gorgeous stage, the drama was to many spectators interested in ‘pantheist mindfulness’ a ‘religious experience’, irrespective of definitions of ‘religion’.

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