Cusa and the *Theologia Germanica*, he holds that all creatures are contained within God. Man, however, is unique. He contains within himself the characteristics of all creation. Weigel uses the term *Begriff* to designate the "enfolding" within man of the nature of all things. *Begriff* comes from *begriffen*, which in modern German means "to understand," but literally means "to grasp." *Der Begriff* (in modern German, "concept") is "the grasped." Man is the "quintessence," the fifth element, rising above the four elements.

For Weigel, the mental restraint necessary to achieve knowledge of God involves pure consciousness or self-knowing, not a knowledge of particular things. In being absolutely passive, however, it is absolutely active, for this type of knowledge is precisely God's knowledge (Weigel conceives God as the "Nothing and All"). So, the mystic does not come to know God but to become God's knowing. This, as we have seen, is a perennial Hermetic theme. Also present in Weigel is the ideal of wisdom as a knowledge of all things, as well as the conception of the "invisible church" first put forward by Franck. Weigel's ideas exercised a great influence on German mysticism and philosophy, and were spread by writers such as Johann Arndt, Gottfried Arnold, and Leibniz.

8. Böhme

Jakob Böhme (1575–1624) began to write just before the publication of the first Rosicrucian manifestos. He was a native of Görzitz, in Lusatia on the borders of Bohemia. Böhme was a simple shoemaker who, in 1600 had a mystical vision: looking at a gleam of light reflected on a pewter vessel, he felt himself able to peer into the inner essence of all things. In a letter, he described the experience:

The gate was opened unto me, so that in one quarter of an hour I saw and knew more than if I had been many years together at a University; at which I did exceedingly admire, and I knew not how it happened to me; and thereupon I turned my heart to praise God for it. For I saw and knew the Being of all beings; ... also the birth or eternal generation of the Holy Trinity; the descent and origin of this world.\(^5\)

For twelve years he remained silent, and when he did write for the first time in 1612, it was only a personal exercise; he never intended his work to be copied and read by others. During the intervening years, there is evidence that Böhme read the alchemists, especially Paracelsus. In Böhme's first work, *Aurora (Morgenthöte im Aufgang)*, he both denies and claims expertise in alchemical theory in the same passage: "Do not take me for an alchemist, for I write only in the knowledge of the spirit, and not from experience. Though indeed I could here show something else, viz. in how many days, and in what hours, these things must be prepared; for gold cannot be made in one day, but a whole month is requi-

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54. Aurora, in *Sämtliche Schriften*, ed. Will-Erich Peuckert and August Faust (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1955), vol. 1, chap. 22, § 105. (All references to Böhme's works will be given by chapter and paragraph number.) English translation: *Aurora*, trans. John Sparrow, ed. C. J. Barker and D. S. Hehner (London: John M. Watkins, 1914), 610. Sparrow's translation was originally published in 1656. It is the only English translation of the entire work. I have included page numbers from Sparrow, because his paragraph numbers do not correspond to those in the German.

55. Weeks, *Boehme: An Intellectual Biography of the Seventeenth-Century Philosopher and Mystic* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 57; H. H. Brinton has remarked that "Böhme did more than borrow a large part of his vocabulary from alchemy, he took over the whole alchemic world-view, which he developed into a philosophic system." See Howard Haines Brinton, *The Mystic Will* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), 81.

56. The influence of Kabbalah on Böhme's works seems to increase with time. Ernst Benz believes that Böhme's sources for Kabbalism were probably oral (Benz, *Mystical Sources*, 48).


59. Ibid., 31.
Walsh writes that "For the new occult philosophy to work, the old Christian philosophy must be redirected. The individual with the theoretical genius to effect their reconciliation and, thereby, become the transmitter of the new symbolism to the modern world was Jakob Böhme."  

Walsh summarizes the radical "redirection" of Christian philosophy, and the key to Böhme's thought, as follows: "The crucial shift is from the idea of all reality as moving toward God to the idea of God himself as part of the movement of reality as well." This is the core of Böhme's Hermeticism: the conception of God not as transcendent and static, existing "outside" the world, impassive and complete, but as an active process unfolding within the world, within history. What initiates this process in the first place? Böhme held that God is moved by the desire to reveal Himself to Himself, but that this self-revelation is psychologically impossible unless an other stands opposed to Him."  

In a later work, Böhme wrote, "No thing can be revealed to itself without opposition [Widerwärzigkeit]: For if there is nothing that opposes it, then it always goes out of itself and never returns to itself again. If it does not return into itself, as into that from which it originated, then it knows nothing of its origin." In short, the "other" is necessary for God's self-consciousness. Without self-consciousness God would not be God, for His knowledge would be incomplete. This other "limits" God; by "othering," God limits Himself, giving Himself discernible "boundaries." Although it is not clear that Böhme thinks God exists at all apart from creation, the mind can think Him apart, can think Him as transcendent—but as transcendent, God is merely a dark inchoate will for self-revelation which Böhme calls the Ungrund (a conception not far removed from Eckhart's Abgrund, or Abyss).  

God does not know Himself through the world qua absolute other, however. An absolute other would be so foreign as to be unknowable. Instead, God in creation "others Himself," corporealizes Himself, a process which reaches its consummation with Christ. It is through Christ that the nature of God and the world is revealed to man. Through Christ, we can reflect on our nature as divine products, and this reflection constitutes a "return" to the source; God's will to self-revelation is fulfilled with His creation's knowledge of Him. As Walsh puts it succinctly, "Böhme is the herald of the self-actualizing evolutionary God." And F. Ernest Stoeffler writes, "To Böhme God was that ultimate Mystery which moves deliberately and constantly toward self-understanding through progressive self-actualization. Philosophy, then, as Böhme understood it, becomes basically the history of the ultimate Mystery striving to know itself."  

Böhme's first work, which came to be known simply as Aurora, was titled Morgenröthe im Aufgang, which Weeks translates as "Morning Glow, Ascending." The preface to Aurora employs the metaphor of the "tree of revealed truth," which is a kind of intellectual history leading up to Luther and the Reformation. Böhme includes himself in his metaphor, claiming that before the tree is at last consumed by fire, it will sprout one final branch, a final and consummate revelation of the truth of the tree, from its root. As Böhme writes later in Aurora, "this book is the first sprouting or vegetation of this twig, which springs or grows green in its mother, like a child that is learning to walk, and is not able to run apace at the first."  

Aurora is a fragmented, inconsistent text. At times its outlook appears pantheistic, even proto-Spinozistic. Böhme writes in the second chapter: "In the Holy Ghost alone, who is in God, and also in the whole nature, out of which all things were made, in Him alone can you search into the whole body or corporeity of God, which is nature; as also into the Holy Trinity itself." And:  

But here you must elevate your mind in the spirit, and consider how the whole nature, with all the powers which are in nature, also the length, depth and height, also heaven and earth, and all whatsoever is therein, and all that is above the heavens, is together the body or corporeity of God; and the powers of the stars are the fountain veins in the natural body of God in this world.  

This is not pantheism, however. It is Hermeticism in its classical form, just as I described it in opposition to pantheism in the introduction: what is claimed is not that all the things in the world are divine or are "full of gods," but that the whole nature as a whole is a part of God's being. Nature is the "body of God," but God is more than just His body. Along with Eckhart, Cusa, and Hegel, Böhme reads the second person of the Trinity, the "Son," as equivalent to nature. This is unusual enough in Hegel, but in an untutored seventeenth-century shoemaker it is quite radical indeed.

60. Walsh, The Mysticism of Innerwordly Fulfillment, 1.  
61. Ibid., 152; Jürgen Habermas has remarked that Böhme was the first to "historicize" God or the Absolute; i.e., to claim that it develops through time. See Habermas's "Das Absolute und die Geschichte: Von der Zweispätigkeit in Schellings Denken" (Bonn: Ph.D. dissertation, Rheinische Friedrich Wilhelms Universität, 1964), 2.  
Böhme writes: “But the Father everywhere generates the Son out of all his powers.” In chapter 16, Böhme speaks of the deity being “continually generated” (immer geboren).

I wish now to examine the details of Böhme’s theory of divine self-manifestation, as it develops throughout his writings, in Aurora and beyond. For Böhme, God is One, but within Him is generated a trinity of worlds: the dark world, the light world, and the elemental world. The third world functions to “reconcile” the first two. Darkness yearns for Light; the unmanifest strives to become manifest. In its yearning, there is kindled within the Darkness a fire. Light is the pure principle of openness, of manifestation without any hiddenness. Fire is the actualization of the pure principle of Light in reality. With the kindling of fire (the alchemical agent of change), a reconciliation is reached between Darkness and Light. The fire burns, but within Darkness; the self-revelation will be of an entity that maintains its integrity, its identity—and thus always an element of inwardness—in and through its manifestation; presence will carry with it a concomitant absence. Böhme writes in Mysterium Magnum that “the eternal free will has introduced itself into darkness, pain, and source; and so also through the darkness into the fire and light, even into a kingdom of joy; in order that the Nothing might be known in the Something.” Böhme further details the divine self-manifestation in terms of what he calls the seven “source spirits.”

Böhme’s account of the spirits—their order, their relationships, even their names—varies from work to work. The following is a kind of amalgamation of the various accounts, following Aurora most closely. Böhme’s seven source spirits are Sour, Sweet, Bitter, Heat, Love, Tone, and Body. In addition to referring to them as “source spirits” (Quellegeist), Böhme also calls them “properties” (Eigenschaften), “qualities” (Qualitäten), and “forms” (Gestalten). All of these spirits are “contained” within God as Ungrund, in potential. God as Ungrund is both All and Nichts. The first three spirits—Sour, Sweet, and Bitter—and Form—form a primordial Trinity of conflict within the Godhead, preceding its manifestation. They are a triad of the unmanifest God or God-in-Himself. Sour (Sour) is a negative force, a “cold” fire, the will of God to remain unmanifest, unrevealed. This is the first stage of desire, as described above: a primitive, egoistic will to self-assertion without self-reflection. But opposed to Sour there is Sweet (Süss): a positive force that contrasts with sourness as expansion, or opening outward, contrasts with contraction, or inwardness. Sour is “pull” to remain in itself, unmanifest; Sweet is a “push” to exteriorize, go out and become for itself. Sour is the “Eternal No”; Sweet is the “Eternal Yes.” Sour is aucker; sweet is a kiss. The third source-spirit, Bitter (Bitter) is a kind of compromise: a going-out that preserves and seeks identity. Bitter reconciles Sour and Sweet because it is the being of a being that freely gives itself or opens out, but simultaneously collects and preserves its manifestations as the revealed aspects of one identical being.

This triad is referred to by Böhme as a “wheel of anguish.” Böhme at times identifies it with the Holy Trinity, with the Paracelsian triad of Salt, Mercury, and Sulphur, and he conceives it as Hell. Basarab Nicolescu refers to it as the “death of God to Himself inasmuch as He is the God of pure transcendence.” The “wheel of anguish” is, in fact, the birth of God. In Mysterium Magnum, Böhme refers to God before this process, God as Ungrund, as “the dark nature” and states that “in the dark nature he is not called God.”

The triad Sour-Sweet-Bitter describes the birth of the living God, the birth of life itself, and the fundamental nature of all living beings. Sour-Sweet-Bitter gives way to Heat (Hitz). Heat is vitality, the incalculable living force that has arisen through the conflict of Sour-Sweet-Bitter. It is the first and most basic outward (that is, worldly) manifestation of the conflict of God-in-Himself. It is as if Böhme conceives of Sour-Sweet-Bitter as rubbing up against one another, giving rise to Heat. This heat then gives way to what Böhme calls the Flash (Schrack). The Flash is not one of the source spirits. Instead, it is literally the force of the preceding four spirits taken together: it is the ignition produced by their activity, and it is life and real being, burgeoning, growing, now separated, externalized, leading on to other things—positive and “external” things.

The Flash is a will to the creation of self-revealing essence—a determinate nature that is open, not closed, to itself—for which Böhme uses the alchemical designation Tinctur. The first four spirits taken together constitute a kind of vector of manifestation. Picture a lightning flash, consisting of the four in dynamic interaction. The Flash also represents mystical vision of the kind Böhme had in 1605: the invisible world is illuminated to the mystic in this Flash.

What the Flash produces is a “hot fire,” which Böhme calls Love (Liebe). Heat, the warmth of exteriorized life, is not inert, nor even stable (yet). It is still a seeking, it is Love. What began as a drive towards manifestation continues. Love is the Tinctur in which all the preceding spirits are united in joyful ecstasy. This is an externalization seeking fulfillment—it is an individuation through self-manifestation. Love’s desire is for complete illumination, display, and representation to itself. This

71. Aurora, chap. 7, § 43; Sparrow, The Aurora, 138.
72. Aurora, chap. 16, § 12; Sparrow, The Aurora, 412.
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seeking (Love) issues in a phenomenon that is a kind of "eject" of the seeking—a kind of significant epiphenomenon. This is Sound or Tone (Schall or Ton). As separate from Love, but as a product of Love, Tone has the potential of making Love manifest to itself. Love manifest to itself is the completion of the cycle.

It can already be seen that the spirits are not absolutely separate from one another, but, to use Hegelian language, are "moments" of a whole. Tone is the "song of Love"; Love is the desire for fulfillment energized by the Flash, ignited by Heat; Heat is the energy produced by the unity in opposition of Sour and Sweet within Bitter. With Tone, the life of God (and the life of life) is ready for fulfillment; having given rise to a "speech" or "expression" of itself (Tone), the process becomes a thing definite to itself. Body (Corpus), the seventh spirit, encompasses the other six. It represents the concretization of the process through its self-expression. This concretization is the completion of the cycle, but as involving the cycle's self-awareness it includes the cycle as well. Böhme writes in Aurora, "The Seventh Spirit of God in the divine power is the corpus or body, which is generated out of the other six spirits, wherein all heavenly figures subsist, and wherein all things appear and form themselves, and wherein all beauty and joy rise up." For Böhme, no spirit can really be without a "body", without giving rise at some point to its own concretization. All things strive to become fully specified and concrete, including God. Böhme calls this Corpus Leiblichkeit, and it is sometimes Begreiflichkeit, "the graspedness" (in modern German, "intelligibleness"; recall Weigel's Begriff).

Böhme refers to spirit's activity of creating a body or a determinate being for itself as Magic. In Six Mystical Points, he writes that Magic is the mother of eternity, of the being of all beings; for it creates itself, and is understood in desire.... Its desire makes an imagination, and imagination or figuration is only the will of desire.... True Magic is not a being, but the desiring spirit of the being.... Magic is the greatest secrecy, for it is above Nature, and makes Nature after the form of its will. It is the mystery of the Trinity, viz. it is in desire the will striving towards the heart of God.

Body is also a return to the original spirit, Sour. Sour was the expression of the desire of God to contract into a hard, self-contained, and self-absorbed center, without external expression. In fact, however, God as Ungrund could not achieve this desire for concretization and integrity without self-expression. Through the cycle, consummated in Body, the original will, now heavily qualified, has actually been fulfilled: God is now a concrete, self-subsistent entity, but through His othering and self-expression. As Niccolò puts it, "The loop is thus closed: the seventh

80. Aurora, chap. 11, § 1.
82. Six Mystical Points, Point 5, §§ 1–6.
83. Niccolò, Science, Meaning, and Evolution, 32.
84. Aurora, chap. 23, § 18; Sparrow, The Aurora, 615–16; see also chap. 13, § 71–74.
85. Deghaye, "Böhme and his Followers," 234.
86. Böhme may have been influenced here by the Kabbalistic conception of Shekinah, which is the tenth Sephiroth, Shekinah is conceived as female and containing all the other Sephiroth in herself as a body.
87. Walsh writes that the seven spirits in Böhme correspond to the last seven Sephiroth [of the Kabbalah which exemplify the order of the cosmos" (Walsh, Boehme and Hegel, 84–85).
on the whole of the cycle of creation. As Arthur Versluys states, "Ultimately, God comprehends himself through man. The mystery of divine nature is, finally, the mystery of human nature as well."88 Böhme's account of the order of creation is quite complex, and I can only indicate some of the most important points here.

In words that call to mind the Emerald Tablet, Böhme writes at one point of the unity of all things: "When I take up a stone or clod of earth and look upon it, I see that which is above and that which is below, indeed [I see] the whole world therein."89 He writes in Clavis (1624): "The whole visible world is a joyful spermatic [eitl spermatischen] active ground; each essence longs for the other, the above for the below and the below for the above, since they are separated from one another, and in such hunger they embrace one another in the desire."90 Böhme describes the "world's existence" as "Nothing else than coagulated smoke from the eternal aether, which thus has a fulfillment like the eternal."91

Before men, God created angels. The angels aid God in the formation of all things according to the seven spirits, for, as Böhme writes in Aurora, "All the creatures are made and descended from these qualities."92 Among the angels, Lucifer was the most magnificent. However, Lucifer, representing the "Sour" quality of in-drawing, broke away from God, thinking himself able to create through the ember of divine fire within him. Lucifer represents the will to isolation, cutting-off, a selfishness that all things exhibit. As Walsh puts it, Lucifer "can imagine his angry fire into all things and by hardening their wills can extinguish the divine light within them."93

Man, for Böhme, is a microcosm containing all the seven spirits within himself. Böhme speaks of man receiving God's Wisdom (Sophia, again, conceived as female) as wife. In man's soul there "hover the revelation of the divine holiness, as the living outflowing Word of God with the eternally known Idea, which was known in divine Wisdom from eternity as a Subjectum or form of the divine imagination."94 The first man was androgynous and possessed supernatural powers. He/She could procreate at will by the power of imagination, could exist without eating or sleeping, and could alter the essences of objects through magic words (a power which suggests alchemical transmutation).95 In naming the animals, Adam drew on the essence of each, for, in the Natursprache (nature language) of Adam, the being of a thing is captured in its name.96 In Böhme's telling of the myth of the Garden of Eden, man must fall be-

cause the unity man enjoys with God in paradise is an unthinking, unreflective, and thus inferior unity. Man must become alienated from God and return to a higher state of unity, in full consciousness of his nature and the nature of God.

How did the fall come about? Adam wanted knowledge of each of the spirits of nature. In the garden, the Tree of Good and Evil represents disharmony, a separation of the spirits of nature into units under the sway of the "Eternal No," withdrawn into themselves, spawning unity. Adam's eating of the fruit of this tree is symbolic of a transformation of imagination. In what Böhme calls Lust, imagination and desire are in harmony. But Adam broke this happy equilibrium when his imagination was perverted into a base and sensualistic form. At this point Lust becomes Begierde, an infinite, negative, insatiable striving.97 Adam's action constituted a turning away from divine unity. Immediately, Adam's nature was radically altered and he desperately sought reconciliation with the divine. This desire manifested itself first in shame, in awareness of the exposure of his bodily imperfection. The revulsion that Adam and all human beings feel about their condition of lack, degradation, and frailty just is the urge to reunite with God.

Wisdom was revealed yet again to men, however, through a man, Jesus Christ, who was perfectly married to Sophia. Christ is the second Adam. Through Christ's passion, death, and resurrection (which Böhme makes equivalent to the work of alchemical transmutation)98 a secret teaching has been revealed to man, which can show him the way to an one-ment with the divine. The interpretation of the Scriptures opens up the possibility of man the microcosm's self-knowledge—what Böhme has striven to accomplish in his work. Böhme writes in Aurora that "you need not ask, Where is God? Hearken, you blind man; you live in God, and God is in you; and if you live holily, then therein you yourself are God."99 Through our self-reflection nature reaches a kind of closure: its pure, eternal forms are identified for what they are. Given that we are natural beings, our contemplation of the forms of nature amounts to nature's holding up a mirror to itself, and given that the nature of nature is the thought of God, it is a mirror held up to God. Thus, through our human understanding, God is fully actualized: He achieves self-awareness and closure.

Böhme does not present philosophical arguments. How then does he explain his access to this wisdom? He holds the view that before his fall, Adam was privy to the Wisdom of God. "But yet when he fell, and was set into the outward birth or geniture, he knew it no more, but kept it in remembrance only as a dark and veiled story [sondern als eine dunkle und verdeckte Geschichte im Gedächtnis behalten]; and this he left to his posterity." Buried in our subconscious (a word which, of course, Böhme did

90. Quoted in Walsh, Boehme and Hegel, 341.
91. Six Theosophical Points (Von sechs theosophischen Punkten; 1620), in Sämtliche Schriften, vol. 4, Point 1, chap. 2, § 19.
92. Aurora, chap. 2, § 11; Sparrow, The Aurora, 50.
93. Walsh, Boehme and Hegel, 227.
94. Quoted in ibid., 237–38.
95. Mysterium Magnum, chap. 17, § 43.
96. Ibid., chap. 35, § 56.
99. Aurora, chap. 22, § 46; Sparrow, The Aurora, 394.
Böhme’s thought was kept alive, however, by solitary figures such as the theologian William Law (1686–1761) and the poet and painter William Blake (1757–1827). It was through French Hermeticists such as Louis Claude de Saint-Martin (1743–1803), who translated Böhme into French, that Böhme eventually came to make an impact on German thought, but as Heinrich Schneider notes, “in the German secret societies [Böhme’s ideas] had never been forgotten.”

I will have more to say about these societies in the following chapter. Böhme’s theosophy became quite influential in Pietist circles, until by the end of the seventeenth century Böhmeanism, as F. Ernest Stoelffer states, “constituted a considerable challenge to established Lutheranism.” Böhme’s first German follower of note was Johann Georg Gichtel (1638–1710), who had been a student of Philipp Jacob Spener, the “father” of German Pietism. Gichtel published an edition of Böhme’s works in 1682, as well as works of his own in which he developed Böhme’s theosophy. Quirinus Kuhlmann (1651–89), a chiliasm with messianic aspirations, was introduced to Böhme by Friedrich Breckling (1629–1710), the same man who had taught Gichtel. Kuhlmann eventually turned up in Moscow to preach his evangel and was promptly burned at the stake. Böhme also influenced Pierre Poiret (1646–1719), who, though a French Protestant, was a pastor in Germany. Poiret edited the writings of Antoinette Bourignon (1616–80), a mystic who announced herself as “the Virgin” Böhme had prophesied as appearing at the end of time.

The radical Pietist Gottfried Arnold (1666–1714) published his landmark work Impartial History of Churches and Heretics in 1699. Arnold shocked many by arguing that it was the heretics—from whom he gave prominent place to Böhme—who represented the true religion. Arnold’s antithetical relationship to Arnold was Ehegott Daniel Colberg (1659–98). Without actually using the term, Colberg attacked the influence of the Hermetic tradition in Germany. Colberg attacks Böhme, Paracelsus, astrology, alchemy, and mysticism as such, seeing in all of them a common element: the desire of man to make himself God. Significantly, Colberg also attacks Pietism, seeing in it the same tendency.

Ernst Benz has written that “In a certain sense one can refer to the philosophy of German Idealism as a Böhme-Renaissance, when Böhme was discovered at the same time by Schelling, Hegel, Franz von Baader, Tieck, Novalis and many others.” Baader (1765–1841), called “Böhmus redivivus,” is often still regarded as Böhme’s principal interpreter. He would become perhaps the most significant and influential Hermeticist of the nineteenth century. Baader, who studied mineralogy under

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103. Ibid., 12.
106. Stoelffer, German Pietism, 168.
Alexander von Humboldt, discovered Böhme in 1787 and made it his
project to revive the mystical tradition. Indeed, it is Baader who should
receive much of the credit for the awakening of interest in mysticism in
the nineteenth century. He was not, however, as faithful a disciple of
Böhme as was, for instance, Oetinger. A devout Catholic, he believed in
a transcendent God and strongly opposed pantheism, or any other at-
tempt to immanitize God. The world, Baader held, is a product of
God's thought and utterly dependent on Him. Like Oetinger, he inter-
preted nature as an "emblem book" and advocated an organic model of
reality, rejecting mechanistic materialism. In politics, Baader was an
egalitarian, anti-capitalist, and advocated the subjection of the state to
the church. His collected works run to sixteen volumes.

Hegel was an avid reader of Baader. Clark Butler refers to "Hegel's
abortive courtship of von Baader" and writes that "despite apparent dif-
fferences, Hegel sought to persuade both the public and von Baader
himself that their positions were reconcilable." Baader did not share
this view, but he did do Hegel the honor of dedicating his lectures on
Böhme's Mysterium Magnum to him. In 1824, Baader stated in a letter
that Hegel's system was a "philosophy of dust." Nevertheless, he
shared Hegel's opposition to scientific rationalism and to the philoso-
phy of Kant. Hegel even stated in print that he and Baader shared the
goal of translating Böhme's eccentric, sensualistic theosophy into "sci-
entific" terms (see chapter 5).

In Hegel's Development, H. S. Harris writes that "I am inclined to
believe in Böhme's influence upon Hegel from 1801 onwards." It is
possible, however, that Hegel could have encountered Böhme's work as
early as the mid to late 1790's, in the midst of what Rosenkranz has
termed his "theosophical phase" (see chapter 3). David Walsh has argued
that Hegel's use in the Phenomenology of Spirit of such terms as element,
aether, expansion, and contraction has its roots in his acquaintance with
Böhme and Paracelsian alchemy. I will deal with the Phenomenology's
further debts to Böhme in chapter 4. Hegel refers to Böhme explicitly in
his Science of Logic (1832 edition), Philosophy of Nature, Lectures on the
Philosophy of Religion, and elsewhere.

Hegel's most famous treatment of Böhme is in his Lectures on the His-
tory of Philosophy of 1805. There, Hegel couples Böhme with Francis
Bacon as the twin representatives of "Modern Philosophy in its First
Statement." He makes the transition from Bacon to Böhme by remark-
ing, "We now pass on from this English Lord Chancellor, the leader of
the external, sensuous method in Philosophy, to the philosophica teutoni-
cus, as he is called—to the German cobbler of Lusatia, of whom we have
no reason to be ashamed. It was, in fact, through him that Philosophy
first appeared in Germany with a character peculiar to itself: Böhme
stands in exact antithesis to Bacon." (LHP 1:188; Werke 25:90).

Hegel's discussion of Böhme in the Lectures occupies twenty-eight full
pages in the Suhrkamp edition of his works—significantly more space
than he devotes to important mainstream figures such as Locke,
Hobbes, Hume, Rousseau, and Jacobi. Hegel's account of Böhme's
theosophy is quite fulsome and positive and shows that Hegel was fami-
lar with several of Böhme's works. Hegel draws comparisons between
Böhme and Proclus, Bruno, and Paracelsus. It is clear that he sees much
of his own thought in Böhme's peculiar, imagistic theosophy. Hegel
writes that although it "appears strange to read of the bitterness of God,
of the flash, and of lightning," once we have "the Idea" in hand, "then we
certainly discern its presence here" (LHP 3:193; Werke 20:95). Hegel
writes, further, that

Böhme's chief, and one may even say, his only thought—the
thought that permeates all his works—is that of perceiving the
Holy Trinity in everything, and recognizing everything as its re-
velation and manifestation . . . in such a way, moreover, that all things
have this divine Trinity in themselves, not as a Trinity pertaining to
the ordinary conception, but as the real Trinity of the Absolute
Idea. (LHP 3:196; Werke 20:98)

Hegel notes that Böhme regards the Trinity as "the absolute Sub-
stance" (die absolute Substanz; LHP 3:212; Werke 20:115).

Hegel's major objection to Böhme is well known: "Böhme's great
mind is confined in the hard knotty oak of the senses—in the gnarled
concretion of ordinary conception—and is not able to arrive at a free
presentation of the Idea" (LHP 3:195; Werke 20:98). From this, some
commentators have concluded that Hegel decisively rejects Böhme's threo-
osophy. However, H. S. Harris finds that Hegel's criticism is "quite consis-
tent with his evident desire [discussed earlier in section two above] to
show that the older alchemical tradition of Paracelsus (and probably
Böhme himself) contained symbolic expressions of important specula-
tive truths." In other words, Hegel rejects the "sensuous" manner in
which Böhme's theosophy is presented, but accepts the inner core of its

111. Harris, Night Thoughts, 85.
112. Walsh, "The Historical Dialectic of Spirit," 28. Walsh believes that only
the influence of Böhme can explain why Hegel believes that history has a
structure, and that it is to be understood in terms of the development of
Spirit.
113. Hegel mentions in the same passage that philosophia teutonica was once
used as a term for mysticism.
114. Later, Hegel writes that "the principle of the Concept [Begriff] is living
within him, only he cannot express it in the form of thought" (LHP 3:197;
Werke 20:100).
115. Compare this comment to J. N. Findlay's observation about Hegel's sys-
tem: "[Hegel's] whole system may in fact be regarded as an attempt to see
the Christian mysteries in everything whatever, every natural process, every
form of human activity, and every logical transition" (Findlay, Hegel: A Re-Examina-
tion, 131).
116. Harris, Night Thoughts, 399.
teaching. As Walsh puts it, "such qualifications aside, when Hegel comes to the content of Böhme's speculation he is clearly a believer."\textsuperscript{117}

I will have something to say about Hegel's relation to Böhme in every chapter that follows, so deep is Hegel's debt to him.\textsuperscript{118}

\textsuperscript{117} Walsh, "The Historical Dialectic of Spirit," 18.
\textsuperscript{118} I concur with Cyril O'Regan when he suggests "massive structural correspondences" between Hegel and Böhme. See Cyril O'Regan, The Heterodox Hegel, 18–19.

The Hermetic Milieu of Hegel's Early Years

One has only to say the words "College of Tübingen" to grasp what German philosophy is at bottom—a cunning theology. . . . The Swabians are the best liars in Germany; they lie innocently.
—Friedrich Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ

1. Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry

In the introduction and chapter 1, I have dealt with the fundamental concepts of Hermeticism and the first 1,600 years of the Hermetic tradition. In this chapter I shall deal in part with events in the seventeenth century, but in the main with the late eighteenth, the so-called Goethezeit, the period of Hegel's youth. Histories of this period often portray Hermeticism as on the decline. This is far from true. If anything, the eighteenth century saw a renaissance of Hermeticism.

By far the most important event in the history of seventeenth-century Hermeticism was the appearance of the Rosicrucian manifestos. The first appeared in the town of Kassel in Brunswick in 1614. Titled Fama Fraternitatis and totaling only thirty-eight pages, the work was addressed to "all the learned in Europe," and named as its source "the praiseworthy order of the Rose Cross." The Fama Fraternitatis had been circulating in manuscript throughout Europe since at least 1610,\textsuperscript{1} and some of the Rosicrucian texts were being circulated in manuscript form among certain like-minded individuals in Tübingen as early as the 1590s.\textsuperscript{1} The Fama was later republished with two other works—Reform of the Universe and Short Reply to the Esteemed Fraternity of the Rose-Cross—in a volume totaling 147 pages, by Adam Haselmayer, a follower of Paracelsus and notary public to Archduke Maximilian.

The three works modestly proposed the "General Reformation of the Entire World." The Rosicrucian manifestos centered around the legendary figure of Christian Rosenkreuz, who was supposed to have been born in 1378, taught the Hermetic art by Arabs, and died in

\textsuperscript{1} Roland Edgworth, "Rosicrucianism: From the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century," in Modern Esoteric Spirituality, 186. See also Donald R. Dickson, The Tesseris of Antilla (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 18.
The Sorcerer’s Apprenticeship

1484. These writings contain, in the words of Antoine Faivre, “traces of the Christian Kabbalah, Pythagoreanism, and a strong dose of Paracelsism.”

The second Rosicrucian manifesto, Confessio Fraternitatis, appeared in 1615. The third and most famous Rosicrucian work, The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreuz, an allegorical prose poem laden with alchemical imagery, appeared in 1616. The principal author of these works, and perhaps the “inventor” of Rosicrucianism, seems to have been Johann Valentin Andreae (1586–1654), a native of Württemberg. Andreae’s father was a clergyman and practicing alchemist. Johann Valentin’s mother was later court apothecary to the duke. His grandfather, Jakob Andreae, had a hand in drafting the Formula of Concord of 1580, which aimed at unifying Lutherans and Calvinists. It was Jakob who created the Andreae family coat of arms: a St. Andrew’s cross with four roses. Johann Valentin was trained as a pastor at the Tübingen Stift, but was expelled following a political scandal.

According to Heinrich Schneider, the Rosicrucians, “declared that unification with God was demonstrable and possible already on earth. For that demonstration they were leaning upon a modification of enlightened natural philosophy which upheld that nature in its teleological structure was a gradual revelation of God.” Given that Böhme’s first work was not even written until 1612, it is not plausible that he influenced the Rosicrucians. Rather, it is more likely that the Rosicrucian movement influenced Böhme. Schneider has suggested that “Böhme took up the Rosicrucian pansophy and the reformatory plans connected with it.” Andrew Weeks notes that Böhme incorporated two Rosicrucian slogans into his writings: the “age of the rose” and the “new reformation.”

The Rosicrucian movement involved members of many different religious denominations. The Rosicrucians held a doctrine of priscus theologia, the position that there is one true, trans-denominational, trans-cultural theology, an account of divine being revealed by God to man in the remote past. They believed that if this ancient wisdom could be recovered, it would unify the world’s religions. Two images are associated with Rosicrucianism, owing to the ambiguity of the German Rosenkreuz: a red cross, and a cross with roses, usually blooming from the center. The meaning of these images has provoked much speculation. The Rosicrucians were supposed to adopt the dress and manners of the different lands into which they traveled, a fact which Julius Evola takes as symbolic of the belief in priscus theologia or philosophia perennis. Antoine Faivre offers the following list of important authors who helped disseminate Rosicrucian ideas: Robert Fludd (1574–1617), Julius Sperber (?–1619), Elias Ashmole (1617–92), Michael Maier (ca.1566–1624), Samuel Hartlib (1595–1662), Jan Amos Comenius (1592–1670), John Heydon (The Holy Guide, 1662), and Theophilus Schweighardt (Speculum sophicum-Rhodo-Stauricum, 1618).

The Rosicrucian manifestos captured the imagination of scores of intellectuals throughout Europe, many of whom desperately tried to make contact with the “order” and to join their ranks. Descartes and Bacon were two such seekers. Some, like Robert Fludd, even wrote their own “Rosicrucian” works in hopes of earning the favor of the order. Eventually, Andreae became disgusted with the furor he had created and sought to distance himself from those who were now calling themselves “Rosicrucians.” In 1619, Andreae published Christianopolis, which called for a “new reformation.” There was no longer any talk of Rosicrucians, but as Frances Yates puts it, “A rose by any other name…”

Christianopolis preached a mysterious doctrine of “theosophy,” which involved a theory of “mystical architecture.” In Christianopolis, as in the Rosicrucian writings, Andreae places a strong emphasis on medicine and healing, perhaps reflecting the influence of Paracelsian medicine. Andreae now issued a call for the formation of “Christian Societies” or “Christian Unions.” Such groups, which were similar to Swabian Pietist “societies,” were actually formed, but the “Societas Christiana” came to an end with the outbreak of the Thirty Years War. In 1628 Andreae attempted to restart the organization in Nuremberg. Leibniz is supposed to have joined a Rosicrucian society in Nuremberg in 1666, and it may have been the very one founded by Andreae. The precepts of Leibniz’s proposed “Order of Charity” are, according to Yates, “practically a quotation from the Fama.” I shall discuss a later incarnation of the Rosicrucian movement, and Hegel’s connections to it, in chapter 7.

It is uncertain when Freemasonry was founded, or what its original purpose was. It nevertheless became a repository for Hermetic philosophy, even employing the symbolic figure of Hermes Trismegistus in some of its rituals. The Freemasons numbered among their members some of the most prominent minds in Europe, and flourished in Germany. Masonic historians distinguish between “Speculative” and “Operative” Masonry, the latter actual stonemasonry, indicating that the society

8. Evola, Hermetic Tradition, 161. One is also reminded of part 3 of Descartes’s Discourse on Method, in which he recommends, as a matter of prudence, obedience to the laws and customs of the country in which one finds oneself. See below for Descartes’s relation to Rosicrucianism.
11. Dickson, Tesserarum, 147.
12. Dickson considers Andreae “the forerunner of Philipp Jakob Spener and German Pietism” (ibid., 19).
probably developed from craft guilds. With the inception of Speculative Masonry, the rites and trappings of the stonemasons took on a symbolic, and metaphysical significance. The Rosicrucians came to exercise an influence over Freemasonry, helping to make it even more mystical.

The first lodges in Germany were established in the 1730s and were of the Franco-Scottish "speculative" variety. The Stuartists, while in France, were intimately involved in the spread of Masonry throughout Europe. It is from them that the "Scottish Rite" of Masonry originates. The Scottish Rite involves higher degrees, higher degrees and above those offered by other lodges. Scottish Rite Masonry exhibits connections with such aspects of Hermetic thought as alchemy and Kabbalism. An offshoot of the Scottish Rite, the so-called "Strict Observance" Masonry, maintained that Masonry originated in Scotland as a survival of the Knights Templar. It is claimed that before his execution the last Grand Master of the Templars, Jacques de Molay, assigned Hugo von Salm, a canon of Mainz, the mission of smuggling important Templar documents into Scotland. De Molay's hope was that the Templars could be reactivated there under another name. That name, according to the tradition, is Freemasonry. Strict Observance Masonry incorporated references to the Templars into its rites and degrees.

Like the Rosicrucians, the Masons believed in the fundamental identity of all religions. Beneath the superficial differences of religions was supposed to lie a præsa theologia. According to Schneider, "The aim of the lodges was the creation of a new man through membership in a communion mirroring a rational universe of freedom and love, just as primitive Christianity had once sought to call into being children of God for the Kingdom of God."

Indeed the conception of an invisible church—an idea advanced, as we saw in the last chapter, by the mystic Sebastian Franck—was one of the precepts of Masonry." Edmond Mazet writes that Masonry would lead its members, "each through proper understanding of his own faith, to this transcendent truth."

Indeed, Masonry would come to "incorporate" Rosicrucianism, investing its higher degrees with Rosicrucian imagery.

In 1738 Pope Clement XII, alarmed by the ecumenical nature of Freemasonry, issued a papal bull excommunicating Freemasons. Among other things, the Masons were accused of denying Christ's divinity (an accusation also leveled against the Knights Templar in 1307). The pope also claimed that the forces behind Masonry were identical with those that incited the Reformation. (Some have suggested that the Rosicrucians were intended as a Protestant counterpart to the Jesuits.)

The Masonic lodges differed in the messages they imparted to their members. Many were Hermetic or mystical in character, and politically conservative. Others were vehicles of Enlightenment secularism and rationalism, and by the end of the eighteenth century these had grown in number. Christopher MacIntosh points out that recent scholarship has tended to focus on the "enlightened" strain of Masonry, and to ignore the mystical, which was also quite strong. Indeed, as MacIntosh points out, these two were not mutually exclusive. Many "enlightened" German Masons actively engaged in alchemy, and saw no contradiction in it.

In the final four decades of the eighteenth century legions of famous men in Germany aligned themselves with Masonry, including Bürger, Claudius, Fichte, Goethe, Herder, Klinger, Knebel, Lessing, Novalis, Rheinhold, Schelling, and Schiller. Many of these men published works dealing explicitly with Masonry. Fichte, for example, became a Mason in Zürich in 1793. There had been no lodge in Jena since 1764, so he joined the Günther Lodge of the Standing Lion at Rudolstadt in Thuringia (which was about eighteen miles from Jena). In 1790 Bichard worked with Ignaz Aurelius Fessler (1756-1839) on the development of various higher degrees for the lodge in Berlin. As part of his work, Fichte wrote two lectures on "the philosophy of Masonry," which he presented to Johann Karl Christian Fischer. In 1802-3, Fischer published the lectures as "Letters to Constant" in two volumes of a journal entitled Elenchus of the Nineteenth Century, or Results of United Thinkers on the Philosophy and History of Freemasonry. The format of "letters" to Constant (a fictitious non-Mason) was imposed on the text by the publisher, along with other arbitrary and ill-conceived changes. The lectures have since been published in a form that approximates Fichte's original, though his manuscripts have been lost.

In 1778, Lessing published his Ernst and Falk: Dialogues for Freemasons (Freimaurergespräche). Lessing's Nathan the Wise (1779), a play with some broadly construed Masonic themes was a great influence on Hegel.

Among other things, the play presses the Masonic theme of a unity of the world's religions, and thus of an "invisible church." In act IV, scene 7, the Christian Friar praises Nathan, a Jew:

Friar: O Nathanael! Nathanael is a Christian soul! By God a better Christian never lived!
Nathanael: And well for us! For what makes me for you a Christian, makes yourself for me a Jew!

The first letter we possess of Goethe's, written in 1764 when he was sixteen, has him applying earnestly for admission to a Masonic lodge. He was not permitted Masonic membership, however, until 1780, when,

24. Harris, Toward the Sunlight, 38.
on June 23 he was initiated into a lodge in Weimar. In 1782 he was the recipient of "Higher Templar Degrees of the Rite of Strict Observance."

According to Heinrich Schneider, the German Masonic lodges were "teeming with magical, theosophical, mystical notions." Schneider notes that much of their lore was Kaballistic in origin. The German Masonic movement was strongly influenced by the writings of the French Mason and Bohemian, Louis Claude de Saint Martin. About 1770, the year of Hegel's birth, a "Hermetic Rite" was established, based on the doctrines of the *Hermetica.* Hermes Trismegistus himself appears in such German Masonic rites of the eighteenth century as that of the "Magi of Memphis." In general, the higher degrees of Masonry were (and are) strongly mystical. Schneider has claimed that the Enlightenment is partly responsible for this. The Enlightenment quest for universal knowledge and power over nature led to a revival of mysticism and occultism, for these had always promised to deliver just those boons. In a reaction against the implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) anti-spiritual, anti-religious rationalism of modern science, certain individuals sought a truer enlightenment in Hermeticism, and hoped to make these secret societies into secret weapons. Schneider writes: "Long before Kant's important answers to the great problems of human life, the mystics in the secret societies had transformed these societies into anti-Enlightenment organizations and, in thus keeping alive the mystical traditions, had made possible the later merging of German Idealism and Mysticism. . . . This mystical movement was the conservative revolution of the eighteenth century, and if in its beginnings its character was not exactly Christian, it was undoubtedly religious."

The individuals known as the Illuminati were the reaction to this reaction. The Illuminati were founded in 1776 as a means to advance the ideals of the Enlightenment: opposition to traditional religion, superstition, and feudalism, and advocacy of scientific rationalism and the rights of man. Initially, they were led by their founder, Adam Weishaupt (1784–1830), a law professor at the Bavarian University of Ingolstadt. Weishaupt, however, proved inept at organization and he soon delegated a great deal of authority to Freiherr Adolph von Knigge (1752–96), who mounted a highly successful membership drive in 1781. Weishaupt's jealousy of Knigge's abilities led to their break three years later. Weishaupt appears to have endowed the order with Hermetic trappings merely as window dressing, to entice members and, perhaps, to discourage the authorities from investigating. Members were encouraged to believe that their superiors possessed some special secret that they would be made privy to in time.

At its height, the Illuminati included literati like Goethe and Herder, as well as numerous other public figures and members of the aristocracy: Karl-August, duke of Weimar, the Prussian reformer Karl von Hardenberg, Duke Ferdinand of Braunschweig, Duke Ernst of Gotha, the publisher C. F. Cotta, Count Johann Cobenzl, and many others. The order thus managed to insinuate itself into the governments of Austria and Germany. Not surprisingly, Weishaupt and company made the infiltration of the educational system a top priority. The staff of the Karlsruhe in Stuttgart included several Illuminati.

The influence of the order was short-lived, however. In 1784 Elector Karl Theodor of Bavaria, seeing the Illuminati as a threat to religion, issued a proclamation commanding them to disband. In 1786 Weishaupt was forced out of his professorship at Ingolstadt and went to live with a friend, Jakob Lanz, in Regensburg. While out walking together one day they were caught in a sudden downpour and Lanz was struck by lightning and killed. The Illuminati membership list was found on his body, constituting proof positive that the order had defied the elector's proclamation. The elector then issued a second proclamation commanding all Illuminati to register with the government and promising a full pardon if they did so. This put the order in a terrible bind. The members could not possibly know how complete a list the government had obtained, so if they registered they were risked imprisonment or worse (if Karl Theodor's promise was disingenuous). On the other hand, if they did not register and their names were on the list, they were risked imprisonment (or worse). In this impossible situation the order self-destructed, as most members chose to obey the elector's edict. Although rumors of the influence of the Illuminati continued to this day, it was never—so far as we know—officially reactivated, and even if it was reactivated there is no evidence that it regained anything like the influence it had from 1776 to 1785.

Most of the Illuminati were also Masons. Jacques D'Hondt in his *Hegel* Secret provides a fascinating discussion of the influence of the Enlightenment ideals and terminology of the Illuminati on the young Hegel. I shall discuss some his conclusions in section 4 here; as well as in chapter 7.

2. Goethe the Alchemist

The life of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) provides a fascinating case study of an eighteenth century Hermeticist. His example makes it vividly clear that an eminent scientist and man of letters could still be deeply immersed in Hermeticism as late as the second half of the eighteenth century.

Most scholars treat the Enlightenment as a single, unitary phenomenon: the effort to emancipate mankind from tradition, superstition, and

despotism. But in fact the Enlightenment took radically different shapes in different countries. This is especially true of Germany, Christopher MacIntosh writes that when the Enlightenment "fell on German soil it often took root in strange and contradictory ways." An example of this is the German phenomenon of the "Enlightened despot," exemplified by Frederick the Great. In particular, the scientific spirit of the Enlightenment took longer to gain ground in Germany. Well into the time of Hegel and Goethe, Hermeticism was still seen in many quarters as a progressive influence. Alchemy survived much later in Germany than it did in the rest of Europe.

Ronald Gray, who has produced an entire study of the influence of alchemy on Goethe, writes that "At the time of Goethe's birth, in... Mannheim, alchemy was all the rage. Many of the most respectable citizens had established alchemical laboratories, and so widespread was the enthusiasm that the city authorities felt themselves obliged to suppress it by law, on the grounds that the numerous ill-guarded fires and the waste of labour and materials were dangerous, and harmful to the economy of the state." As a young man, Goethe read Paracelsus, Basil Valentine, van Helmont, Swedenborg, and the Kabalah. In particular, as Gray notes, Goethe was influenced by an anonymous alchemical work entitled *Aurea Catena Homeri* (ca.1723). Goethe's letter to E. Th. Langer of May 11, 1770, discusses the Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus. Goethe's notebook from Frankfurt and Strasbourg contains many references to Paracelsus and Agrippa. According to Richard Friedenthal, for Goethe "alchemy was a thing of the present, not of the past, a still living survival from the middle ages." Indeed, Gray claims that "The degree to which alchemy had established control over Goethe's interests in early manhood can scarcely be over-emphasized."

In September of 1768, Goethe, exhausted, took leave from Leipzig University and spent the winter at home. He was much of the time in the company of Susanna von Klettenberg, who belonged to the sect of Herrnhuter, a Pietist movement founded by the notorious hermeticist Count von Zinzendorf (1700–60). An alchemical adept, Klettenberg introduced Goethe to the *Opus Mago-Cabalisticum et Theosophicum* of Georg von Wellin. Together, they engaged in alchemical experiments in Goethe's father's attic. Friedenthal describes their work in dramatic detail:

33. MacIntosh, The Rose Cross, 55.
34. Gray, Goethe the Alchemist, 4.
35. Friedenthal, Goethe, 66–68; see also Gray, Goethe the Alchemist, 5.
36. Gray, Goethe the Alchemist, 5.
37. Ibid., 182.
38. Ibid., 6.
39. Friedenthal, Goethe, 67. See also Gray's entire Goethe the Alchemist. Gray claims that Goethe probably encountered much of alchemy in a Bohmean formulation, though he probably never encountered Bohme's thought directly.
40. Gray, Goethe the Alchemist, 7.
41. This work was based on Paracelsus and Bohme. Goethe is also known to have read Kabbalistic works. See Friedenthal, Goethe, 66.

The pious Fräulein von Klettenberg stood with the young Goethe in front of a wind furnace, with sand-bath and chemical flasks. They stirred up the ingredients of Macrocosm and Microcosm. They tried to produce silicic acid by melting quartz pebbles from the river Main. They discussed mysterious salts, to be conjured up by unheard-of means, a 'virgin soil' with extraordinary powers... Even in his [later] natural science he remained far truer to the world of *prima materia* and the *Chemical Marriage*, as the text-book of the Rosicrucians was called, than subsequent opinion has been willing to admit.

In later years, Goethe was far more critical of alchemy: "It is a misuse of genuine and true ideas, a leap from the ideal, the possible, to the reality, a false application of genuine feelings, a lying promise, which flatters our dearest hopes and aspirations." However, Goethe's disapproval appears to have extended only to the actual practice of laboratory alchemy. He continued to be influenced by alchemical theory and symbolism. In 1795 he composed an alchemical fairy tale laden with Hermetic imagery of all sorts—such as, for instance, the image of the *ouroboros* (the snake biting its tail).

The conception of a unity of the world's religions is joined in Goethe's thought, as it is in Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry, to a quasi-pantheistic nature mysticism. In words that call to mind Schiller's poem *Die Freundshaft* (1782), which is quoted—or rather deliberately misquoted—by Hegel in the final passage of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Goethe writes in the *Sorrows of the Young Werther* (1774):

From the inaccessible mountains across the desert that no foot has trodden, and on to the end of the unknown ocean, breathes the spirit of the eternally creating One, rejoicing in every speck of dust that bears Him and is alive,—Ah, in those days, how often did my longing take the wings of a crane that flew overhead and carried me to the shore of the uncharted sea, to drink from the foaming cup of the infinite that swallowing rapture of life, and to taste but for an instant, despite the limited force of my soul, one drop of the bliss of that being which produces all things in and by means of itself."

David Walsh notes that "Goethe made frequent use of the idea of unifying opposites in the sense derived from the alchemical symbolism, both in his literary and scientific writings." His aim, as Gray puts it, was "an incorruptible permanence which embraces in itself all opposites." Goethe writes: "I was pleased to imagine to myself a divinity [Gottheit] which reproduces itself from all eternity, but since production cannot be thought of without multiplicity [Mannigfaltigkeit], this divin-
vitalistic tradition" and points out that they crop up later in Schelling's Weltalter. David Walsh has also compared Goethe's seven stages to Böhme's seven source-spirits. The Urpflanze is conceived by Goethe as a microcosm of the universe. The seven stages of plant development mirror the seven stages of the unfolding and division of creation as a whole. But all the parts and stages are simply the modes of one fundamental form. Goethe believed that each stage of the plant's development was understandable as a transformation of the primordial leaf. Gray writes that Goethe held this observation (which has been disputed by most botanists) to be "confirmation of his belief that the whole was present in all of its parts." Again, we are reminded of a similar position in Hegel. Goethe also believed in the reality of an Urteil, of which all animals are modifications, though he did not develop this theory as extensively as he did that of the Urpflanze.

Goethe was an active and enthusiastic Mason. He even composed songs and orations in honor of deceased Masonic brethren, in which he elaborated his own views of the true mission of Masonry. Some of these views may be inferred from his 1784 fragment Die Geheimnisse, a fable about a spiritual order of knights (modeled, it seems, on the Templars). The knights are led by a Humanus, who unites in person the underlying 'truth' of the various religious faiths—again, we find the conception of the invisible church. More than once in Die Geheimnisse, Goethe uses the imagery of the cross and roses. Goethe's name and reputation served to lend a measure of respectability to Hermeticism throughout his lifetime. Many were undoubtedly introduced to aspects of Hermeticism through Goethe, and his work was a major conduit for the indirect influence of alchemy, Böhme, Kabbalah, and various other Hermetic offshoots.

3. Swabian Pietism and F. C. Oetinger

Laurence Dickey has argued recently that the approach of going "back to the text" with Hegel's work is misguided, for so much of the intellectual context of what Hegel wrote is unfamiliar to us. The Germany of Hegel's youth consisted of almost two thousand sovereign states, cities, dukedoms, and bishoprics. There was no centralized government, and no center of intellectual and spiritual life. Thus any German thinker must be understood in terms of his local context. Dickey argues that Hegel must be understood in the context of what he calls the Protestant civil piety of Old Württemberg. This tradition involves, among

47. Quoted in Gray, Goethe the Alchemist, 50.
48. Ibid., 128.
49. Walch, Boehme and Hegel, 94.
50. Ibid., 128.
51. Ibid., 127.