

Pantheism

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Pantheism, from the Greek *πᾶν* (*pan*), “all”, and *θεός* (*theos*), “God”, is a religious-philosophical doctrine in which God and the world, God and nature are equated. The concept of pantheism arose out of controversies in the philosophy of religion in the early 18th century and first appeared with the rationalist philosopher John Toland. As a doctrine of All-Oneness, pantheism asserts the immanence of God and the indistinguishability of the workings of divine and natural law in contrast to dualistic ways of thinking, especially the Judeo-Christian theology of creation. As a collective name for a multitude of ideas, it is fuzzy both in historical and systematic terms, and, depending on its manifestation, it intersects with atheism and materialism (primacy of the secular), acosmism (doctrine of God as the only reality) and mysticism (spiritual union with God), pantheism (doctrine of all-in-God), panpsychism (doctrine of all-soulness) or monism (doctrine of oneness). While pantheism’s emergence points to the modern interface between philosophy, theology and natural science, pantheistic ideas can also be found in the early history of European and non-European thought. In the course of the Spinoza-renaissance, pantheism experienced an unprecedented reevaluation, especially in Germany in the 18th and 19th centuries, which gave it a cultural and historical significance far beyond its specific origins.

Citation and license notice

Bollacher, Martin (2020): Pantheism. In: Kirchhoff, Thomas (ed.): Online Encyclopedia Philosophy of Nature / Online Lexikon Naturphilosophie. ISSN 2629-8821. doi: 10.11588/oePN.2020.0.76525

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1. On the Genesis and Conceptual History of Pantheism

The term pantheism is a linguistic coinage of the 18th century (Kluge 1975: 529), formed from the Greek *πᾶν* (*pan*), “whole”, “all”, also “the whole”, “universe”, and *θεός* (*theos*), “God”, “deity”, “divine being” (Menge 1903: 439 f., 269) and denotes a religious-philosophical doctrine in which God and world, nature and God are equated or at least declared synonymous. The term is first documented in the English philosophy of the Enlightenment, namely by the Irish-English philosopher John Toland (1670–1722), who in his 1705 work *Socinianism Truly Stated [...] Recommended by a Pantheist to an Orthodox Friend* describes himself as a pantheist and in his treatise *Pantheisticon* of 1720 proclaims the pantheistic creed of a brotherhood committed to the Socratic culture of dialogue. Toland himself might have known the terms ‘pantheist’ and ‘pantheism’ (in their Latinized form ‘*pantheos*’ and ‘*pantheismus*’) from the

work *De Spatio Reali seu Ente Infinito* by the British mathematician and theological writer Joseph Raphson (ca. 1648–ca. 1715), published in 1697. Toland, however, only uses the personal designation (“pantheist”) and not the abstract noun (“pantheism”) (Cooper 2014b: 25). Nevertheless, in the history of philosophy Toland is rightly regarded as “the Father of Modern Pantheism” (Cooper 2014a: 578), who solemnly swears his pantheistic scholarly society to the principles of immanence: “All things in the world are one, and one is all in all things”, and: “The universe is God and is forever immutable” (Toland *Pantheisticon* [1720] 2014: 221, 223). That the concept of pantheism had become adopted after Raphson and Toland in the denominationalist and religious-philosophical debate of the time is proven by the apologia *Defensio religionis nec non Mosis et gentis judaicae contra duas Dissertationes Joh. Tolandi (Defense of Religion as well as Moses and the Jewish People against two treatises of John Toland)* of 1709 by Jacques de la Faye (1710: 107–113) who was

active at the English Church in Utrecht. The author rebukes Toland's pantheistic views – "pantheism is, incidentally, merely an undisputed form and manifestation of the atheism that *Spinosa* reintroduced from the underworld and from the writings of certain pagan philosophers in the last century" (Faye 1709: 194¹) – and thereby documents the provocatively antiorthodox character of the new doctrine. The idea of All-Oneness, emphatically advocated in the *Pantheisticon*, arose out of the ideological controversies of the early Enlightenment at the interface "between philosophy, theology and the emerging natural sciences" and was subsequently used "above all as a battling concept" (Jamme 1995: 630) with which a philosophy committed to "thinking for itself" (Kant 5: 283) claimed sovereignty of interpretation over the entire worldly knowledge of the time. In early Enlightenment England, traditional theism saw itself challenged by both deist and pantheist theories; Toland himself has shaped the history of modern thought not only as the founder of modern pantheism but also as a representative of English deism. By trying to put Christianity on a generally valid, rational-natural basis (Toland *Christianity Not Mysterious* 1696; Lechler 1841), the deists or free thinkers promoted, as Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) acknowledged, the enlightened "spirit of testing" (Herder 10: 652). But both the deists and particularly the pantheists were confronted early on (and ever after) with the accusation of godlessness from the theological-philosophical side. Particularly Benedictus [Baruch] de Spinoza's (1632–1677) consistent equation of God and nature in the *Ethics* (1677) was, as de la Faye's writings show, viewed by his opponents as the epitome of atheistic pantheism, and Pierre Bayle's (1647–1706) authoritative verdict in his *Dictionnaire historique et critique* that Spinoza was an "Athée de Système" (Bayle 1720: 2631), set the polemical tone of the criticism of pantheism for decades. In historical terms, Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) thus has some justification when he emphasizes the secular and profane side of pantheism, describing it as an "abused word" and a "contradictio in adjecto" and seeing in it "only a euphemism for atheism" (Schopenhauer 4:

143). As a merely disguised, rhetorically veiled atheism that dissolves the concept of God into nature (see Mauthner 1920–1923), pantheism also comes close in semantic terms to materialism, which "sees in matter the ground and the substance of all reality, i.e. not only the material, but also the spiritual and the intellectual" (Schmidt/Schischkoff 1991: 463; Wollgast 1998). Materialism found its first consistent expression in 18th century France with Julien Offray de La Mettrie (1709–1751), Claude Adrien Helvétius (1715–1771) and Paul-Henri Thiry, Baron d'Holbach (1723–1789), whose *Système de la Nature* (1770) was famously "deadly" to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), leading him away from metaphysics "towards living knowledge, experience, action and poetry" (Goethe 14: 534, 536). From the perspective of the uniformity of existence pantheism also appears as a variant of monism, which seeks to trace the totality of the real back to God's substance as an ultimate unity (cf. Hillermann/Hügli 2017) and which in its naturalistic-materialistic form was then advocated notably by the zoologist Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919) in *Der Monismus als Band zwischen Religion und Wissenschaft* (1893). The attempt by Karl Christian Friedrich Krause (1781–1832), a student of Fichte and Schelling, to introduce the term 'pantheism' (the doctrine of all-in-God) into philosophy and to emphasize its theistic, transcendental aspect in contrast to the naturalistic interpretations of pantheism (*Vorlesungen über das System der Philosophie*, 1828; Dierse/Schröder 2017) aimed at saving religious pantheism. A modification of pantheism that is linked to idealism has, since antiquity, been the doctrine of panpsychism. Panpsychism says "that all things have a mind or a mind-like quality" (Skrbina o.J.) and that the whole of nature is moved by a spiritual force ('world soul'). If, within the pantheistic discourse, the divine reality dominates over the earthly one can speak of 'acosmism' (worldlessness): in this sense Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* calls Spinoza's doctrine "acosmism", because for the author of *Ethics* God is "the Oneness, the absolute substance, in which [...] the world, nature, has disappeared" (Hegel 20: 162 f.).

¹ Author's translation. The Latin original runs: "cùm praeter ea Pantheismus sit tantùm certa forma & species Athe-

ismi, quem ex inferis & ex scriptis quorundam Ethnicorum Philosophorum superiore saeculo reduxit *Spinosa*".

In the same breath, however, he also describes Spinoza's system as "absolute pantheism and monotheism raised to the level of thought" (ibid.: 164). As with all cosmological designs so also with the doctrine of All-Oneness the question arises of the justification of God in light of the "contrapurposive" (Kant 9: 105) in the world, i.e. theodicy, but – just as with the problem of individual freedom, personal responsibility and the place of the subject in the totality of nature – this cannot be answered in general terms, but only with regard to the particular variety of pantheism in question (Mander 2020).

2. The History of Pantheism up to the Enlightenment

Modern pantheism owes its emergence to the systemic competition between theology and philosophy which intensified in the age of rationalism, as well as to the natural sciences which were establishing themselves and which regarded nature as "the *existence* of things as far as this is determined by universal laws" (Kant 5: 159). With the revolutionary equation of God and nature, pantheism responds to the tendencies of secularization arising from modernity's revaluation of nature and from scientific research. But early pantheistic or pantheistic-related views can already be found in antiquity and in non-European cultures. Thus the Hindu and Buddhist idea of the All-mind and All-God (Brahmā; All-Buddha) or the Chinese idea of Tao display features of a doctrine of oneness. But their – by Western standards – mystical character tends more to panentheism or panpsychism (Glaser 1996: 45 f., 126, 147 ff.). Even the worship of a world-shaping power in the ethnic religions of North America (the Manitou of the Algonquin Indians) is occasionally interpreted in a pantheistic way (Feest 2003: 75). In Europe we have been encountering pantheistic views since the early days of natural philosophy. The presocratic Xenophanes of Colophon (ca. 570–ca. 475 B.C.) – after Aristotle the founder of the doctrine of oneness (*Metaphysics* 986b) – answers the anthropomorphic, hierarchically structured polytheism of Homer and Hesiod with a commitment to the All-One and teaches – anticipating Toland's *Pantheisticon* – that "the All is one and subject to no change" (Capelle 1968: 122). Likewise for his pupil Parmenides (ca. 515–ca. 455 B.C.), being is an

indivisible, "unitary, coherent whole" (ibid.: 166). The Stoics' theory of nature moves between a materialistic and a pantheistic view, which counters the Aristotelian dualism of material and form with a holistic view according to which the world consists of a material-physical substance that is nevertheless determined by an immanent Logos. The Zeus hymn of Cleanthes of Assos (ca. 330–ca. 230 B.C.), a disciple of the Stoa-founder Zeno of Citium, has unmistakably pantheistic traits in its glorification of the world logos and living-working nature: for "one reason rules eternally, unites everything harmoniously" (Cleanthes cited in Bubner 1: 294). More than 400 years later, the 'last Stoic', the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius (121–180 A.D.) expressed himself in his self-reflections in similar words about the oneness of God-nature, in which the ontological dimension is combined with the ethical-philanthropic and social dimension of the equality of all people. The fundamental principle: "there is *one* world of everything and *one* God through everything and *one* substance and *one* law, reason, which is common to all spiritual beings" leads to the ethical imperative: "Love mankind" (1984: 153, 161). Pantheistic traits can also be found in the Neoplatonic model of emanation, according to which the All-One brings forth all individual things in an infinite sequence from spirit (*nous*) and the world-soul down to matter. For Plotinus (ca. 205–270 A.D.), the most influential thinker of Neoplatonism, the goal of the human soul is to reunite with the divine in an ecstatic-mystical ascension and to overcome the sphere of alienation in the return to true being. In his posthumous *Enneads*, he defines the graduated whole, which is animated right down to the level of plant world, as a continuously "coherent entity" (Plotinus V2 quoted in Bubner 1: 372). Nevertheless, the denigration of matter and nature to a mere "shadow image of the true" (Plotinus III8 quoted in Bubner 1: 377) that we find in the Neoplatonic spiritual metaphysics (Krämer 1967) seems incompatible with the pantheistic glorification of God-nature. Neoplatonic ontology in its double structure of worldliness and world-flight also found its way into the ascendent Christianity: thus Augustine (354–430) owes his overcoming of Manichaeism to a reading of Neoplatonic writings, which showed him a pantheistic-looking God "stretched out through the infinite vastness of all spaces" (*Bekenntnisse* 1983: 181). After his conversion to the

Christian faith, Augustine's religiousness remained marked by Neoplatonism – but exclusively in its mystical-contemplative form (Thimme in Augustinus *Bekenntnisse* 1983: 16 f.; *Selbstgespräche* 1986: 59). In the scholasticism of the following centuries pantheistic motifs are at most operative in a subterranean way and where they are openly revealed, for instance in Amalrich of Bena (died ca. 1205) or David of Dinant (ca. 1160–ca. 1217), who declared “the identity of his three principles: God, spirit and matter” (Vorländer II: 68), are condemned by church authorities as heresy. At the end of the scholastic period it is Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464), influenced among others by Meister Eckhart (ca. 1260–ca. 1328), who, with his doctrine of the coincidence of opposites (“coincidentia oppositorum”), formulates pantheistic “fundamental concepts” (Dilthey 2: 324), although in his *Apologia doctae ignorantiae* (1449) he resolutely rejects the accusation of pantheism made by the Orthodox camp. The conflict between individual freedom of thought and a “tyrannically asserted church doctrine” (Burckhardt [1860] 1988: 360) ends almost 150 years later with the Renaissance philosopher Giordano Bruno's (1548–1600) death at the stake. For Hegel, the key character of Bruno's writings is “the beautiful inspiration of a self-consciousness that [...] knows the unity of its being and all being” – admittedly not without “mystical enthusiasm”. Invoking Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743–1819), who had compared Bruno to Spinoza (Jacobi [21789] 2000: 157 ff., 193–220), Hegel adopts the thesis that “the sum of [Bruno's] teachings is Spinoza's One and All or, in general terms, pantheism” (Hegel 20: 24 f.). Bruno himself asserts the infinity of the universe – “it is everything, is the greatest, the One, the universe” (Bruno 1986: 130 f.) – and affirms the Copernican world view. But he does not advocate a perfect identity of God and nature, since he understands the world as “mirror of the divine oneness” and maintains “a tension between divine immanence and transcendence that is difficult to resolve” (Kirchhoff 1997: 65, 82; see Otto in Bubner 3: 306 f.; Vorländer III: 42 f.).

3. Spinoza and the Pantheism Dispute

For his unifying metaphysics Bruno died a death by fire, but his martyrdom shone into the future and remained a beacon for the following century's quests towards

“Light and Enlightenment” (Albert 1895, cited in Kirchhoff 1997: 140). The influence of the philosopher from Nola became bound up with that of Spinoza, because both “stand each for themselves and alone and belong neither to their century nor to their part of the world, which rewarded the one with death, the other with persecution and insult” (Schopenhauer 1: 571). Opinions were divided on Spinoza too, and it was not until the Spinoza renaissance of the 18th century that the Jewish-Dutch thinker, who had been banned from the synagogue, began his rise in Germany (of course never wholly unchallenged) to the position of philosophical and moral authority. Spinoza, in his geometry-inspired *Ethics*, defends a decidedly rationalist system of world interpretation that is derived from the assumption of an eternal, infinite substance that “is in itself and is conceived through itself” (*Ethics* I, Definition III: 87): “Deus, sive Natura” (*Ethics* IV, Praefatio: 382; Proposition IV, Demonstratio: 392, 394). True, the divine substance appears to the human mind only in the cognitive forms of the attributes and their affections (modes), as created and not as creating nature (“natura naturans” versus “natura naturata”) (*Ethics* I, Proposition XXIX, Scholium: 132), but Spinoza's consistent equation of God and nature is unprecedented and is subsequently regarded by opponents and supporters of his teaching alike as the epitome of pantheism. Spinozism, according to Ernst Bloch (1885–1977), is “mathematical pantheism”, which distinguishes it from Bruno's enthusiasm, but not from his “tremendous immanence” (Bloch 2: 999). When Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi reported in 1785 in his book *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* that Lessing (in a discussion from July 1780 after reading Goethe's *Prometheus* hymn) had spoken out against the “orthodox concepts of the deity” (Jacobi [1785] 2000: 22) and in favour of Spinoza's pantheism, he triggered a fierce dispute that shook intellectual Germany until the 19th century. This controversy, that became known as the ‘Pantheism Dispute’ or ‘Spinoza Dispute’ (Scholz 1916), resembled – as Goethe remarks in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* – an “explosion that laid bare the most secret affairs of worthy men” (Goethe 14: 696) and led Heinrich Heine (1797–1856) to say in 1835 that pantheism was “Germany's public secret” and that Germany was “the most fertile soil of pantheism” (Heine 8/1: 61). Jacobi, who like Lessing

saw realized in Spinoza the Eleatic-Neoplatonic formula of the “hen kai pan” (“one and all”) (Jacobi [1785] 2000: 22 f., 46; [21789] 2000: 159), equates Spinozism with “atheism” (Jacobi [1785] 2000: 118) but acknowledges Spinoza’s logical stringency, from which he thinks he can only be saved by means of a leap of faith (“salto mortale”) (Jacobi 2000: 26) into a “belief in an absolute beyond” (Hegel 2: 333). While Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786) still argued for a “purified pantheism” (Mendelssohn 1785: 259), Goethe found his own outlook, which had taught him “to see God in nature, nature in God indissolubly” (Goethe 17: 246), confirmed by Spinoza’s philosophy. Pantheistic motifs are already evident in Goethe’s early work in the piety towards nature and world that grips the individual in his bodily and spiritual whole (Bollacher [1969] 2012) along with the presence of Neoplatonic, mystical and hermetic ideas (Zimmermann 1969/1979). But it was only Goethe’s in-depth reading of the Spinozist philosophy of immanence after the 1780s that allowed him to combine his anthropological, religious, scientific and aesthetic views into an integrated whole. He rejected Jacobi’s personal belief in God as the “hollow sentiment of a child’s brain” (Goethe 15/1: 446) and, in the *Studie nach Spinoza* (1785/86), proclaimed the identity of existence and wholeness. When Jacobi speaks of Spinoza’s “fundamentally stupid universe” (Jacobi [31819] 2000: 312), Goethe praises nature as his “idol” (Goethe 14: 535). The divine reveals itself to his phenomena-directed perception in the manifold of finite things which point to an archetype. The pantheistic conception of God-nature thus underlies both the discovery of the intermaxillary bone and the so-called Urpflanze – the morphological type for the formation and transformation of the genus plant – and leads the naturalist to the realization of a “ἐν καὶ πᾶν” (“hen kai pan”), just as the artist interprets the classical works of art as works of nature: “everything arbitrary, everything imagined perishes – there lies necessity, there lies God” (Goethe 14/1: 423 f.). Goethe later formulated it in a more subtle way: “We are / nature-researching pantheists / poetry-polytheists / ethical monotheists” (Goethe 13: 64). Herder, in his Spinoza discussion *Gott* (1787; 21800) also cites Lessing’s “Ἐν καὶ πᾶν! One and all” (Herder 4: 740), the secular article of faith of the philosophy of oneness, but he wants to save Spinoza’s system from the compromising notion of “pantheism” – the world is

more an “expression” of God, “a manifestation of his eternally living, eternally working forces” (Herder 4: 713, 772). The equivalence of God and nature also appears in Herder’s *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784–1791), showing him the path of development of nature, history and culture, because “all existence is equal to itself, [...] based on the same laws” (Herder 6: 24). Jacobi, who, together with Christian Jacob Kraus (1753–1807), dismisses the *Ideen* as a “hyperphysics of pantheism” (Jacobi [1785] 2000: 122), again arouses Goethe’s displeasure with his 1811 publication *Von den göttlichen Dingen und ihrer Offenbarung* (*On Divine Things and their Revelation*) – Goethe could only take the assertion that “nature conceals God” (Goethe 17: 246; Jacobi 1811 in Jaeschke 1999: 230) as an attack on his innermost convictions. But above all, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775–1854), who already in his work *Bruno* of 1802 had designed a pantheizing unified model, saw himself pilloried as atheist by Jacobi and pleaded in his counter-statement *Denkmal der Schrift von den göttlichen Dingen* (1812) for a reconciliation between theism and the philosophy of nature – whereby Schelling’s “pantheism of human freedom” (Jacobs 1998: 62) distinguishes itself out from both Jacobi’s philosophy of faith and Spinoza’s pantheism based on physical and logical necessity. Pantheism also provided a theoretical foundation for the Romantic efforts at synthesis in aesthetics, religion and natural philosophy (Gladigow 1990). Thus Novalis (1772–1801) considers a “union” of pantheism and monotheism in a “true religion” (Novalis 2: 443 f.; Kneller 2019) to be possible, Friedrich Schleiermacher’s (1768–1834) speeches *Über die Religion* (1799) connect back to Spinoza (Camerer 1903; Arndt 2001), and Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) criticizes Jacobi’s antithesis of “naturalism and theism, God and nature” (Schlegel 1812 quoted in Jaeschke 1999: 337), but interprets pantheism as a mystical-religious, world-fleeing doctrine (Schlegel 1804/1806: 213). The after-effect of Spinozist pantheism on Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843), who also excerpted Jacobi’s Spinoza book, displays a picture oscillating between naturalistic and spiritualistic interpretations (Mieth 1978; Ogden 1989; Riedel 1998/1999; Büttner 2010). The American transcendentalists, e.g. Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) in *Nature* (1836), also espouse a spiritualistic veneration of nature.

4. From the 19th Century to the Present

If the concept of pantheism in the early modern period owes its legitimation in the history of ideas to its opposition to theistic dualism, it subsequently finds itself increasingly on the defensive against the powerful systems of Kant's critical philosophy – pantheism has no answer to the purposiveness of nature (Kant 8: 541) –, Hegel's 'panlogism' and "metaphysics of the absolute spirit" (Bubner 6: 324), and the exact natural sciences. Even Goethe, who in his old age still had to defend himself against religious zealots, confesses a few months before his death, in a gesture of Socratic irony, that he had explained to one of "those riff-raff" who spoke to him "with great naivety" of pantheism, "that no one has yet presented themselves to me who knows what the word means" (Goethe 38: 482). If the otherwise diffuse concept of pantheism as a formative religion of the classical-romantic epoch seems to lose more and more of its intellectual binding power, in the age of the political-social upheaval in 19th century Europe it increasingly unfolds its emancipatory and revolutionary potential. For Heine, who in Paris had become acquainted with the Saint Simonians' doctrine of progress and their pantheizing religiosity, modern pantheism possesses an explosive power that breaks open the eternal "dualism" (Heine 2: 34) of spirit and matter, liberates mankind as worldly "incarnation of God", and even conjures up the utopia of a "democracy of equally glorious, equally holy, equally blessed gods" (Heine 8/1: 60 f.). Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872) goes one step further: for the Young Hegelian the pantheistic God is a mere empty name, and he contrasts Spinoza's "Deus sive Natura" with his own naturalistic-anthropocentric slogan "Aut Deus, aut Natura" ("Either God or Nature") (Feuerbach 1847: 392). For Karl Marx (1818–1883) too, all religion is man's work and "ends with the doctrine that *man is the highest being for man*" (Marx [1844] 1971: 216), and Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) writes, with reference to Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), that even modern pantheism, as a "consequence of Christianity" (Engels 1844: 175), has served its time. Under the sign of secularisation – "God himself is dead" (Hegel 2: 432) –, of scientism and naturalistic monism, would a "pantheistic yea-saying to all things" (Nietzsche 3: 853) still be possible at all? Surprisingly, one of the main representatives of naturalistic monism, Ernst Haeckel,

allows us to answer this question with a clear affirmative. Although Haeckel is oriented throughout towards modern natural science and Charles Darwin's (1809–1882) theory of descent, he also sees himself in the tradition of pantheistic views running from antiquity to Giordano Bruno and Spinoza, who formulated the "most perfect" (Haeckel 1893: 33) system of pantheism, until Goethe. All forms of pantheism, Haeckel suggests, have had in common the idea of "cosmic oneness" and the "connection of [...] spirit and matter – or [...] of God and world" (ibid.: 10). That the Christian churches still perceive the pantheistic rejection of a personal conception of God as a provocation is proven by two striking examples: in 1853 the accusation of pantheism brought forward by Protestants cost the Heidelberg lecturer Kuno Fischer his philosophical teaching license (Fischer 1854; Schenkel 1854), and as late as 2010 Pope Benedict XVI used a sermon to criticize "neo-pagan" pantheism for its "egalitarian view of the 'dignity' of all living beings" (paragraph 13) and which was incompatible with the Catholic doctrine of creation.

However, in the 20th century, the church's verdict was countered by influential voices who attest to the continuing presence of pantheistic convictions: Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965) advocated an ethical pantheism in his essays in *Kultur und Ethik* (Schweitzer [1923] 1996), and Albert Einstein (1879–1955) affirmed Spinoza and a "cosmic religiosity" in 1930 (Einstein [1930] 1993: 16 ff.). Particularly in view of the global destruction of the environment and the technicistic exploitation of natural resources, the pantheistic appreciation of the natural whole, as Arnold Toynbee (1889–1975) already recognized, could become more relevant for the future (Toynbee 1972: 141–146). If it is part of the task of a contemporary philosophy of nature to "keep the plurality of perceptions and interpretations of nature with their historical foundations in play" (Kirchhoff/Karafyllis ²2020: XI), it should also be possible for a productive reception of interpretive models in natural philosophy to update and expand the history of pantheism. In contrast to the rationalist "disenchantment of the world" (Horkheimer/Adorno 1969: 9 ff.), the return to a "cosmic religiosity" seems to open up innovative perspectives that semantically extend pantheism beyond its traditional boundaries in the direction of an ecological ethics. Paradigmatic for such a holistic view are James Lovelock's (b. 1919)

Gaia hypothesis (Lovelock [1979] ³2000; cf. Evers ²2020: 237 f.), according to which the earth is understood as a living, interactive organism, Jane Bennett's (b. 1957) plea for a vital materialism (Bennett 2010) or the panpsychism-inspired book by Australian environmental philosopher Freya Mathews (b. 1949) *For Love of Matter* (Mathews 2003), in which a holistic pattern of experience defined by empathy and eros replaces the biblical mandate of mastering nature set out in Gen. 1, 28 (Evers ²2020: 235). But a modern understanding of pantheism could also take up the notion of reverence as a form of modesty before the perfection of existence and of life (Schweitzer [1966] 2020) and of the experience of the infinite in the finite: what Goethe calls the "supreme reverence", "reverence for oneself", prepares man "for the highest [...] which God and nature have produced" (Goethe 10: 423), and, according to Kant's well-known words, the "*starry heavens above me, and the moral law within me*" (Kant 6: 300) fill the mind with ever new "admiration and reverence".

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