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The Processes of *Universio* and *Katabolé* in the Creation of the World

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The human condition is a highly complex and at the same time impenetrably obscure one, steeped in ignorance and surrounded by mystery. We are involuntarily born into this world and are forced onto a path of having to struggle and toil, searching for meaning and longing for respite from our labours. Perplexity is an indelible mark of life which shrouds all that we do and think. Suffering is a daily affliction that wears us down and weighs heavily on our spirit. The Greek tragedians expressed a powerful and universal truth when they described life as a vale of tears and as inextricably aligned with suffering (SW I: 336-339).¹ Schelling reminds us that “ancient art is in no way so simply cheerful and frivolous, as some badly informed romantics have portrayed it in modern times. The pain that lies in it is only a deeper one than those tears, which a trivial sentimentality has the power to evoke” (SW X: 268).² History is to be understood as a grand tragedy and the world passes through endless episodes

¹ See F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophische Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kriticismus*, SW I: 336-339; F.W.J. Schelling, *System der Weltalter*, ed. Siegbert Peetz (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1990), 111. Schelling’s collected works are referenced as SW (*Sämtliche Werke*), edited by his son Karl Friedrich Schelling and published by Cotta, 1856-1861.

² F.W.J. Schelling, *Darstellung des philosophischen Empirismus*, SW X: 268: “Die antike Kunst ist keineswegs so schlechthin heiter und leichtsinnig, wie sie einige übel berichtete Romantiker in neuerer Zeit dargestellt. Der Schmerz, der in ihr liegt, ist nur ein tieferer als jene Thränen, welche eine alltägliche Sentimentalität zu erregen die Macht hat.” English translation is mine.



of birth and death, seemingly without any definite purpose (SW I: 485-486).³ The fate that the human being must undergo is a daunting one, squeezed in the grip of *le malheur de l'existence*, as Jean d'Alembert put it, which very often drives one to the brink of despair (SW X: 267; SW XII: 33).⁴ It is this painful lot that forces the human being to ask the quintessential philosophical questions: why is there something rather than nothing? (SW XIII: 7)⁵ Why is there reason instead of unreason? (SW X: 252)⁶ Why was the human being born into such a stark and meaningless existence? The aimless wandering through life bespeaks a seemingly inextinguishable hopelessness and an ineradicable sadness (SW VII: 399).⁷ If there is any one fundamental condition that is shared by all of humanity Schelling was convinced that it had to be this universal perception of the unholiness of all being.⁸ Schelling came to see that the human being finds himself originally with the burden of having to accept a tainted and imperfect life.

The problem that Schelling faced in his late philosophy and which he strove to understand concerned the beginning of philosophy. The ontological question—*why is there something rather than nothing?*—reveals the human being's preoccupation with the very facticity of his existence and also makes him aware of his precarious and at the same time mysterious position in the world. Daniel Sollberger argues that this fundamental question of philosophy concerning existence, which has immeasurable consequences for the self-understanding of the human being, is the genuine ground of Schelling's entire philosophical career, especially when one turns to his later years.⁹ The human being is struck by the facticity or mere givenness (*Tatsächlichkeit*) of existence, not only by the being of the objective order of things epitomized by the world, but the irrefutable fact of his own existence which is the basis of his feeling of wonder and spirit of inquisitiveness. Yet this questioning attitude, searching for an

³ F.W.J. Schelling, *Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie, Zweites Buch: Philosophische Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie oder Darstellung der reinrationalen Philosophie*, SW XI: 485-486: "Das Loos der Welt und der Menschheit ist *von Natur* ein tragisches, und alles was im Lauf der Welt Tragisches sich ereignet, ist nur Variation des Einen großen Themas, das sich fortwährend erneuert."

⁴ Schelling, *Darstellung des philosophischen Empirismus*, SW X: 267; *Philosophie der Mythologie, Erstes Buch: Der Monotheismus*, SW XII: 33.

⁵ F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Erstes Buch: Einleitung in die Philosophie der Offenbarung oder Begründung der positiven Philosophie*, SW XIII: 7.

⁶ Schelling, *Darstellung des philosophischen Empirismus*, SW X: 252. See also F.W.J. Schelling, *Grundlegung der positiven Philosophie (Münchener Vorlesung WS 1832/33 und SS 1833)*, ed. Horst Fuhrmans (Torino: Bottega D'Erasmus, 1972), 296.

⁷ F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (Albany: State University of New York Press), 62-63: "Hence, the veil of dejection that is spread over all nature, the deep indestructible melancholy of all life." See also Schelling, *Grundlegung der positiven Philosophie*, 479-480.

⁸ F.W.J. Schelling, *Einleitung in die Philosophie*, ed. Walter E. Ehrhardt (Stuttgart, Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 1989), 102; F.W.J. Schelling, *Initia Philosophiae Universae. Erlanger Vorlesung WS 1820/21*, ed. Horst Fuhrmans (Bonn: Bouvier, 1969), 70: "Es ist das älteste Gefühl der Menschheit, ein Gefühl von der Unlauterkeit alles Seins."

⁹ See Daniel Sollberger, *Metaphysik und Invention. Die Wirklichkeit in den Suchbewegungen negativen und positiven Denkens in F.W.J. Schellings Spätphilosophie* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1996), 3: "Sie bildet das eigentliche Movens der immer erneuten Ansätze Schellings und durchzieht sein ganzes Werk."

answer to the “why?” of life, is provoked and elicited by a negative experience of existence, for it is only against the background of a profound recognition of the meaninglessness of existence that the human being is driven to pose the questions that penetrate to the ground of his very being. Schelling expresses this same sentiment when, repeating the words of the book of *Ecclesiastes*, he describes the history of the world as the passage of generations of people bound to unremitting toil and work, yet to no discernible purpose, for all is but vanity and human life passes away insignificantly in the merciless forward march of time (SW XIII: 7).¹⁰

This negative appraisal of life and nature, as Walter Schulz aptly points out, appears strongly in Schelling’s later thought, while in his early work the predominant interpretation of nature regards it as a source of harmony and positivity.¹¹ This is not to say, however, that Schelling gradually came to develop the idea that nature itself was the direct cause of the human being’s adverse experience of life, conceivably according to some altered rendition of a neo-Platonic doctrine of the fallenness of matter. On the contrary, the negativity of life is the product of human action and is not the inevitable result of the plain existence of nature. More than anything else, if an accounting of the darkness of life is to be held the answer must be sought within the human being and nowhere else.

It is, therefore, not an exaggeration to claim that, according to Schelling, the overwhelming impression that one receives from an experience of the world is that existence lacks intrinsic meaning. This is a conviction that extends throughout human civilization, shared by every culture and society. The appearance of the world, in its

¹⁰ Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Erstes Buch: Einleitung in die Philosophie der Offenbarung oder Begründung der positiven Philosophie*, SW XIII: 7: “Die ganze Natur müht sich ab, und ist in unaufhörlicher Arbeit begriffen. Auch der Mensch seinerseits ruht nicht, es ist, wie ein altes Buch sagt, alles unter der Sonne so voll Mühe und Arbeit, und doch sieht man nicht, daß etwas gefördert, wahrhaft erreicht werde, etwas nämlich, wobei man stehen bleiben könnte. Ein Geschlecht vergeht, das andere kömmt, um selbst wieder zu vergehen. Vergebens erwarten wir, daß etwas Neues geschehe, woran endlich diese Unruhe ihr Ziel finde; alles, was geschieht, geschieht nur, damit wieder etwas anderes geschehen könne, das selbst wieder gegen ein anderes zur Vergangenheit wird, im Grunde also geschieht alles umsonst, un es ist in allem Thun, in aller Mühe und Arbeit der Menschen selbst nichts als Eitelkeit: *alles* ist eitel, denn eitel ist alles, was eines wahrhaften Zwecks ermangelt.”

¹¹ See Walter Schulz, “Freiheit und Geschichte in Schellings Philosophie,” in *Schellings Philosophie der Freiheit. Festschrift der Stadt Leonberg zum 200. Geburtstag des Philosophen* (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1977), 36-37: “Der frühe Schelling hat, so kann man sagen, immer nur das Positive in der Natur gesehen. Das heißt konkret: er hat das Harmonische als Prinzip der Selbstgestaltung, etwa in den Bildungen der Kristalle oder den Phänomenen des Organismus, einseitig in den Vordergrund gerückt. Die von ihm beschriebene Natur ist gleichsam die paradiesische Natur. Jetzt wandelt sich seine Einstellung zur Natur wesentlich. Diese Wandlung vollzieht sich jedoch nicht auf einmal, sondern in Übergängen. Konkret: Wenn Schelling sagt, daß die Natur sich verkehrt habe, dann meint er zunächst nur die Natur im Menschen, d. h. dessen natürliche Bedürfnisse und seine Geschlechtlichkeit. Nachdem Schelling aber im Menschen entdeckt hat, daß die Natur eine zerstörende Macht sein kann, sucht er das Wesen der Natur überhaupt neu zu fassen. Er erklärt, daß Natur eigentlich ihrer Struktur nach Trieb, Sucht und Begierde sei. Das heißt nicht, daß die Natur böse sei. Das Böse entsteht erst und allein durch den Menschen, der die Natur gegen den Geist zum Prinzip erhebt. Die Natur an sich ist also durchaus nicht böse.... Schelling behauptet, daß die ganze Unordnung und Unvernunft in der außermenschlichen Natur auf das Schuldkonto des Menschen gehe.”

seemingly purposeless existence and bleak horizon, surely militates against the supposition of a divinely ordained order of things, full of goodness and aiming towards an eschatological end. However, the presupposition of Schelling's doctrine of positive philosophy is a belief in the living God, a belief that serves as the principle of this philosophical science and hence is maintained regardless of and even despite the actual empirical observations made about the world. Reconciling the view of the existence of God with the indisputable perception of being's alienation from God becomes, therefore, the most difficult challenge confronted by philosophy, not to mention the most perplexing state of affairs of which humankind must take account.

At issue here is a doctrine of creation which attributes the cause of the world's existence to an omnipotent and absolutely free divine will. Yet the difficulty in accepting this doctrine is to explain how divine causality and the fallen state of worldly existence are related, since a sincerely religious sensibility will indubitably rail against the idea that God intentionally willed that human existence be experienced as a dreary and painful situation without any seeming hope of salvation. Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that the traditional Christian conception of God ascribes to his essence an omnipotent will and an omniscient intellect, attributes which portray God as an infinitely powerful being and thus absolutely capable of creating a world of God's own choice. Schelling was intensely interested in this relation between divine causality and created being—more particularly, human freedom—throughout his philosophical career which he considered to be the crux of true philosophical thinking. The point of reconciliation between these two poles of being can be found in Schelling's mature doctrine of creation.¹²

The greatest mystery of all is the reason why God created the world. The ontological question that plays such a prominent role in Schelling's late philosophy is, according to Schelling, unanswerable due to the fact that knowledge of the motivation for creation is unattainable for the human being. Nobody has a problem with seeing the fact *that* the world exists; the difficulty arises when the true fact of the world needs to be explained which concerns its origin and true meaning. The divine will is the mystery *par excellence*, inscrutable to the human mind and steeped in God's own secret intentions beyond the purview of human intelligibility. Why God decided to forsake his state of complete and absolute self-sufficiency to create the world and us human beings cannot be ascertained by merely philosophical means but is a question that only divine revelation can illuminate (SW XIII: 346).¹³ Despite this open avowal of the impenetrable mystery surrounding the operations of the divine will, Schelling

¹² For a comprehensive account of Schelling's doctrine of creation see Emilio Brito, *La création selon Schelling, Universum* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1987), especially 329-459.

¹³ See F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Zweites Buch: Der Philosophie der Offenbarung erster Teil*, SW XIII: 346: "Um so weniger hätte man den Begriff der Schöpfung zum voraus als ein dem menschlichen Begreifen absolut undurchdringliches Geheimniß ansehen sollen. Um so mehr mußte man versuchen, ob sich nicht eben in diesem Begriffe selbst die Mittel entdecken lassen, jenen Widerspruch (zwischen einer unendlichen Causalität des Schöpfers und der Freiheit des Geschöpfes) auf eine überzeugende Art zu beseitigen."

nevertheless ventures to offer an explanation of the process of creation. Indeed, philosophy can bring some light to bear upon this most profound of mysteries.

Because God's essence is that of absolute freedom, God is uncontroversially able to do whatever God so chooses. Yet this does not mean that God can act in a completely arbitrary or self-defeating manner, since in order to remain self-possessed God needs to act according to God's own essence. Thus, to be absolutely free implies the freedom to break away from one's own being and to have the capability of becoming something different from what one is. The self-sufficient unity of God's original state that is characterized by rest and an infinite joy dwells in a static eternity where there is neither movement nor any developmental process. If God did not have the freedom to exit this state of unity and to become something other, God would not be truly free, as Schelling explains in the following passage:

This freedom to be an other is the first presupposition of all free movement, of all life in God, otherwise we would assume that God is something motionless, as Spinozists do. Therefore God is he who can be unlike himself, not like the Deus which can become an other, but rather it belongs to his will to be other than himself and himself. Thus God is not the freedom to be and not to be, but rather he is free to be able to be and not to be able to be. God is he who can say: "I will be who I will be"; and that which is highest in God is that he is again free from God himself, that this is not an obstacle for him.¹⁴

By being true to his proper essence God can be both different from himself and at the same time be himself without contradicting or acting against his nature. This capability to become something other than who one is and all the while to remain who one is seems to be an attribute that is specific to God alone, intimately related to his absolute freedom. It is the nature of this freedom to be liberated from one's own essence, a point that serves as the genuine stumbling-block for philosophical investigations. As Schelling explains, the true mystery of God's divinity is not that God exists, but that he leaves his state of pure interiority and unity and enters the domain of exteriority, that is, that God goes out of himself.¹⁵ Why God freely chooses to forsake his absolute solitude and to become different from himself remains at bottom an inscrutable mystery. This act of freedom, however, constitutes the process of creation.

The process of becoming different or other takes place by the transformation that occurs in God's original unity as God goes out of himself into the domain of

¹⁴ Schelling, *System der Weltalter*, 161: "Diese Freiheit ein Anderer zu sein ist die erste Voraussetzung aller freien Bewegung, alles Lebens in Gott, sonst würden wir als Spinozisten Gott als ein Unbewegliches annehmen. Also Gott ist der sich selbst Ungleich Seinkönnende, nicht wie die Dyas die anderes werden kann, sondern es steht in seinem Willen ein anderer von sich zu sein und er selbst. Also Gott ist nicht die Freiheit zu sein und nicht zu sein, sondern er ist frei sein zu können und nicht sein zu können: Gott ist der, der sagen kann: "ich werde sein der ich sein will"; und das Höchste in Gott ist daß er von Gott selbst wieder frei ist, daß dies ihm keine Schranke ist." English translation is mine.

¹⁵ Schelling, *System der Weltalter*, 140-141.

exteriority. The result is that the original unity is inverted into a manifold plurality; God's innerness becomes an all-encompassing outerness; and the stillness of eternity is broken up by the movement that ensues from this act. By positing something which is other than him, God makes creation possible as an independent entity that exists beside or alongside God (*praeter Deum*). Schelling calls this transformation the process of *universio*, which is the birth of the universe (SW XII: 95).¹⁶ In the *universio* God's original unity becomes inverted into its opposite which accounts for Schelling's etymological explanation of this term as *unum versum*, the inverted one (*das umgekehrte Eine* or *die Umkehrung des Einen*) which he also describes as the prototype of all existence (*das Prototyp aller Existenz*) (SW X: 305, 311).¹⁷ A complete reversal of the nature of divine being takes place: the inner becomes outer, the unity becomes a plurality, and the stillness becomes movement. This is how Schelling explains the process of *universio*:

That which was the deepest potency in the inner being is the most powerful potency in the outer being. We can therefore also represent this entire process as an inversion of the one (*uni-versio*) and consider its product as the inverted or turned-out one = *uni-versum*. However, because the whole is now of such a kind whose innermost power of subsistence has now become outer, thus this whole relates itself to that which is higher as something potential, passive. Potentiality is the character of totality.¹⁸

Even though God becomes his opposite in the *universio*, God continues to be himself in his innerness. As a matter of fact, God does not change at all and actually remains the same in his inner being; the only transformation that occurs is the creation of a domain of outerness or exteriority that is contrasted with the original unity and innerness (SW XII: 90).¹⁹ The process of *universio*, therefore, merely establishes an inner-outer dichotomy that was not present prior to this process. Consequently, God can now be regarded from two different points of view, namely, God in himself (*Gott in sich*) and God outside of himself (*Gott außer sich*) (SW XII: 105-106).²⁰ Naturally, God in his state of exteriority is radically different from God's inner nature which persists in its immutable unity.

¹⁶ Schelling, *Philosophie der Mythologie, Erstes Buch: Der Monotheismus*, SW XII: 95.

¹⁷ Schelling, *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*, SW X: 305, 311; See also F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung, 1841/42*, ed. Manfred Frank (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 202.

¹⁸ Schelling, *Initia Philosophiae Universae. Erlanger Vorlesung WS 1820/21*, 149: "Das, was die tiefste Potenz war im Innern, ist die mächtigste Potenz im Äußern. Wir können also diesen ganzen Hergang auch vorstellen als eine Umkehrung des Einen (Uni-versio) und das Produkt derselben als das umgekehrte oder herausgewendete Eine = Uni-versum betrachten. Weil aber das Ganze jetzt ein solches ist, dessen innerste Bestehungskraft jetzt äußerlich geworden ist, so verhält sich dieses Ganze gegen das Höhere als Potenzielles, Leidendes. Potenzialität ist der Charakter der Totalität." English translation is mine.

¹⁹ Schelling, *Philosophie der Mythologie, Erstes Buch: Der Monotheismus*, SW XII: 90: "Gott ist nur äußerlich und dem Schein nach ein anderer, innerlich derselbe."

²⁰ Schelling, *Philosophie der Mythologie, Erstes Buch: Der Monotheismus*, SW XII: 105-106. See also *System der Weltalter*, 145.

This domain of exteriority that is the direct result of the *universio* has various characteristics. Schelling describes this outer domain as the state of tension (*Spannung*) of the potencies (*die Potenzen*) that have been displaced from their proper unity.²¹ God suspends his being in exteriority (SW XIV: 353; SW XII: 93; SW XIII: 322).²² Furthermore, due to the separation of the potencies from their original unity and the subsequent tension, the form of this exteriority is that of brokenness (*die Gebrochenheit*) and tearing or rupture (*Zerreiung*), terms which emphasize the disrupted nature of exterior being.²³ The unbroken one is broken and the wholeness of God’s inner unity is torn apart in the *universio*. This inversion of the divine unity into the worldly dissolution (*die weltliche Zertrennung*)²⁴ is also referred to as God’s image or picture (*Bild*), as the visible image of the invisible God and as that which can be seen with one’s eyes and perceived by consciousness.²⁵ What is most striking of all in the *universio*, given the fact that the product of this act has such a tragic nature, is that this is a process that was willed by God and intentionally executed by the divine will (SW XII: 91).²⁶ It is true that one of the main motivations driving this process is God’s will to be known in his exteriority.²⁷ God does not want to remain concealed in God’s self-sufficient unity forever, but desires to reveal himself to beings who are other than him and who can come to know him, something which can only take place if God emerges from himself.

The desire to be known, Schelling frequently affirms, is one of the noblest virtues that one can exhibit and it is present in God’s being in a most eminent fashion.²⁸ Nonetheless, one cannot help but be driven to perplexity when one tries to make sense of the actual result of this quest for self-revelation which is being that is broken and torn apart and residing in a state of tension, ostensibly not indicative of who God really is. The apparent contradiction between God’s inner intention and the outer result of God’s willing is explained by Schelling using the age-old doctrine of the divine economy. The Church Fathers developed the notion of the divine economy to explain the discrepancy between God’s will and the visible reality of creation that generally seems to contradict the divine plan. A process is said to become according to a certain economy (*κατὰ τινὰ οἰκονομίαν*, *kata tina oichonomian*) when something is exhibited in its outer form or appearance that is different from that which is intended

²¹ F. W. J. Schelling, *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung. Teilband 1*, ed. Walter E. Ehrhardt (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1992), 125.

²² F. W. J. Schelling, *Andere Deduktion der Prinzipien der positiven Philosophie*, SW XIV: 353; *Philosophie der Mythologie, Erstes Buch: Der Monotheismus*, SW XII: 93; *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Zweites Buch: Der Philosophie der Offenbarung erster Teil*, SW XIII: 322.

²³ Schelling, *System der Weltalter*, 176-177.

²⁴ Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung, 1841/42*, 375.

²⁵ Schelling, *System der Weltalter*, 146.

²⁶ Schelling, *Grundlegung der positiven Philosophie*, 344; *Philosophie der Mythologie, Erstes Buch: Der Monotheismus*, SW XII: 91: “Diese *universio* ist das reine Werk des göttlichen Wollens und der göttlichen Freiheit.”

²⁷ Schelling, *System der Weltalter*, 145: “Dieses Äußere Gottes will erkannt sein was es ist”.

²⁸ Schelling, *Grundlegung der positiven Philosophie*, 470; *Philosophie der Offenbarung, 1841/42*, 189.

or which lies hidden (SW XII: 91; SW XIV: 177-178).²⁹ The upshot of this view is that God reveals Himself through or by means of his opposite, *per contrarium*, or as St. John Chrysostom put it, διὰ τῶν ἐναντιῶν (*dia tōn enantiōn*) (SW XIII: 272).³⁰ God's intention or purpose is other than what first meets the eye; God shows something other than what God actually does.³¹ This discrepancy between what God intends and what God shows or reveals constitutes the essence of the divine art of dissimulation or irony (*die göttliche Verstellungskunst oder Ironie*) that is inherent in the divine economy (SW XIII: 304).³² Exterior being, therefore, though willed by God, does not adequately reveal God's true, inner essence because it is dissimulated in the state of exteriority. If this is the case, then we meet with the problem of how to interpret the meaning of this exterior being and to what purpose it came to exist. The answer to this question can only be won if we penetrate to the inner will of God which is the seat of God's intentions, the reality behind the appearance. Taken on its own terms, exterior being cannot reveal the true meaning of creation, since it is by its very nature other than God's true essence. Yet God did intend to establish this exterior domain of being as part of God's overall plan of creation which should tell us that it serves the function of a medium or means of God's self-revelation. That God exited his state of self-sufficient unity and created the universe represents a miracle in the divine life (SW XII: 91).³³ For Schelling, the process of the world is a mystery of God, and all of history and even Christianity itself is incomprehensible without this mystery (SW XIII: 305).³⁴

By assuming a being which is foreign to his true, inner essence God is able to appear in the domain of exteriority and above all to be known. God cannot show his will immediately, but requires the mediation of that which is contrary to his essence in order to manifest himself (SW XIII: 326).³⁵ In God's manifestation or appearance

²⁹ Schelling, *Einleitung in die Philosophie*, 114; *Philosophie der Mythologie, Erstes Buch: Der Monotheismus*, SW XII: 91; *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Drittes Buch: Der Philosophie der Offenbarung zweiter Teil*, SW XIV: 177-178; *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung, Teilband 1*, 203.

³⁰ Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Zweites Buch: Der Philosophie der Offenbarung erster Teil*, SW XIII: 272; *System der Weltalter*, 143. This expression is from St. John Chrysostom's fourth homily on St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians. In his commentary on 1 Corinthians 1:22-24, Chrysostom writes: "When therefore they who seek for signs and wisdom not only receive not the things which they ask, but even hear the contrary to what they desire, and then *by means of contraries are persuaded*—how is not the power of Him that is preached unspeakable?" (Italics added). See www.newadvent.org/fathers/220104.htm.

³¹ Schelling, *System der Weltalter*, 143.

³² Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Zweites Buch: Der Philosophie der Offenbarung erster Teil*, SW XIII: 304; *System der Weltalter*, 156; *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung, Teilband 1*, 136.

³³ Schelling, *Philosophie der Mythologie, Erstes Buch: Der Monotheismus*, SW XII: 91: "Und so ist denn nun durch dieses *Wunder* der *Umstellung* oder *Umkehrung* der Potenzen das Geheimniß des göttlichen Seyns und Lebens selbst erklärt."

³⁴ Schelling, *Einleitung in die Philosophie*, 114; *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Zweites Buch: Der Philosophie der Offenbarung erster Teil*, SW XIII: 305; *System der Weltalter*, 143: "Der Gedanke daß der Weltproceß als ein Geheimniß Gottes betrachtet wird, wo die Absicht eine andere ist als im ersten Blicke gezeigt wird, ist so weit entfernt Gottes unwürdig zu sein, daß die ganze Geschichte und der Weltproceß und selbst das Christenthum ohne dieses Geheimniß unverständlich ist."

³⁵ Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Zweites Buch: Der Philosophie der Offenbarung erster Teil*, SW XIII: 326.

God effectively excludes his own true essence, since such an exclusion is the necessary condition of God's making himself visible to others. Schelling reminds us that to exclude (*excludere*) means to appear or to be visible (*parere*) (SW XII: 93).³⁶ The paradox of this situation is that insofar as God appears he does not manifest his true being since his inner essence is excluded from the appearance. God's appearance is, therefore, a dissimulated form of his true essence, a veil or disguise covering up God's genuine identity. Because God's true essence does not appear in the domain of exteriority and is hidden from view, Schelling describes the being that predominates in this realm as *exclusive being* (*das ausschließliche Sein*) since all that is asserted is the outer being to the total exclusion of inner being.³⁷ Moreover, by virtue of the simple fact that this being resides outside of God Schelling also calls it the *outside-divine being* (*das außergöttliche Sein*), in the sense of *praeter* and not *extra Deum* (SW XII: 97; SW XIII: 271, 333, 374; SW XIV: 351).³⁸ All that one sees and is conscious of pertains to exterior being—a truly unremarkable claim—for all appearance or manifestation is by its very nature exterior or dwelling in exteriority. What we are not conscious of and what we do not see is God's true, inner essence.

God's will to manifest himself through his opposite in the *universio* results in the absolute hegemony of exterior being. When confined to pure exteriority being appears as broken, torn, and disrupted, hardly an environment conducive to a joyful and tranquil worldview. The primordial human feeling of the unholiness of being stems directly from this domain of exteriority that excludes the unity that is proper to God's inner essence. In the very emphatic sense of the phrase, God can be understood as intentionally excluding and dissimulating his true essence in the process of creation and as willfully allowing exterior being to have complete hegemony over creation. This act of purposely excluding inner truth from appearing in creation comes across as a highly selfish and egoistic disposition. God charts out his plan of creation as he sees fit and simply asserts the hegemony of exterior being, seemingly without any consideration of the ultimate ramifications of his actions and how this will affect his created beings.

All is not lost, however, since in the act of creation, though it results in the predominance of exterior being, a being which is different from and independent of God also comes to be. This is the appearance of the Son who is God's image (SW XIII: 326).³⁹ When God becomes other than himself he gives birth to the Son who is

³⁶ Schelling, *Philosophie der Mythologie, Erstes Buch: Der Monotheismus*, SW XII: 93; *System der Weltalter*, 140.

³⁷ Schelling, *System der Weltalter*, 179.

³⁸ Schelling, *Philosophie der Mythologie, Erstes Buch: Der Monotheismus*, SW XII: 97; *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Zweites Buch: Der Philosophie der Offenbarung erster Teil*, SW XIII: 271, 333, 374; *Andere Deduktion der Prinzipien der positiven Philosophie*, SW XIV: 351. The difference between the two meanings of *das außergöttliche Sein*, namely, *praeter* and *extra Deum*, is as follows: *praeter Deum* refers to the being that God intentionally creates in the *universio* which enjoys an independent existence; *extra Deum*, however, corresponds to the being which the human being occasions through the fall or catastrophe of consciousness which brings about a state of darkness and the alienation from the true God.

³⁹ Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Zweites Buch: Der Philosophie der Offenbarung erster Teil*, SW XIII: 326: "Diese zweite Persönlichkeit (der Sohn) heißt darum εἰχὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου [*εἰχὼν tou Theou tou aoraton*], das *Bild* des unsichtbaren Gottes, d. h. eben des Vaters, der unsichtbar ist, schon darum, weil er

the second countenance or person of God. The Son exists in the domain of exterior being and as such is an independent person, in possession of a will of his own. Therefore, when God, or more appropriately, the Father, appears in the Son, he does not manifest himself *as* the Father, but rather as a completely different and independent being, namely, the Son. Thus, the Son is God, but not *as* the Father. The entire domain of the exclusive or outside-divine being is represented by and is in the hands of the Son. The centrally important feature of the Son is that he has a will of his own that is independent of the Father. Although the Son dwells in exterior being, since he is nothing but the appearance of the Father, the Son also has access to the domain of interiority by means of his own independent will. The egoism of the Father, which is expressed in the affirmation of exterior being to the exclusion of interior being, can now be challenged by the Son who can will to reveal the true inner being of creation.

The generation of the system of the world is, therefore, the transition, the beginning of the complete development and birth of the second potency in nature. Authentic nature begins here and the complete application of the previously developed system takes place here. Already now being is no longer the exclusive property of the first potency; its willing is only a blind willing. It excludes the others from itself in this will. That is why that willing is an exclusive one and that is why an exclusive, selfish willing belongs to the Father. All of nature is the egoism of the Father that has been gently broken by love and transformed into love.⁴⁰

The will of the Father and the will of the Son, therefore, corresponding to the first and second potencies, act respectively as the exterior and interior dimensions of being. The revelation of the true God takes place in the context of exteriority, but through the will of the Son who allows the interiority of his own willing to disperse the darkness of exterior being. In the New Testament the Son is rightly referred to as the brightness (*ἀπαυγάζμα*) of God's glory.⁴¹

selbst nie in den Proceß eingeht, wie der Sohn allerdings mit in den Proceß eingeht, während der Vater als absolute Ursache, als der nur die Spannung setzende, selbst außer der Spannung bleibt; der Vater ist aber auch noch in dem besondern Sinn der unsichtbare, daß er seinen wahren Willen verbirgt, dieser wahre Wille wird also nur sichtbar, d. h. offenbar, durch den Sohn, und insofern ist dieser Bild des unsichtbaren Gottes, oder, wie ihn derselbe Apostel anderwärts nennt, der Abglanz, der Widerschein (*ἀπαυγάζμα*, *apaugasma*) des Vaters, der Abdruck seines *wahren* Wesens."

⁴⁰ Schelling, *System der Weltalter*, 181: "Die Entstehung des Weltsystems ist also der Übergang, der Anfang zur vollständigen Entwicklung und Geburt der zweiten Potenz in der Natur. Hier fängt die eigentliche Natur an, und hier ist die vollständige Anwendung des früher entwickelten Systems. Schon jetzt ist das Sein nicht mehr das ausschließliche Eigenthum der ersten Potenz, ihr Wollen ist nur ein blindes Wollen. In diesem Willen schließt sie den anderen von sich aus, darum ist jenes Wollen ein ausschließliches und darum gehört dem Vater ein ausschließliches selbstisches Wollen an, die ganze Natur ist der sanftgebrochene durch Liebe in Liebe umgewandelte Egoismus des Vaters." English translation is mine.

⁴¹ See Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers. Faith, Trinity, Incarnation*. 3rd edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), 201, 303.

Besides the *universio*, Schelling also uses the concept of the *katabolē* to describe the process of creation and the generation of the Son from the Father (SW XIII: 329; SW X: 324, 366).⁴² The term *katabolē* (καταβολή) is borrowed from the New Testament where it normally appears in the phrase “the foundation of the world” (καταβολή τοῦ κόσμου, *katabolē tou kosmou*).⁴³ It has four basic, interrelated meanings: (1) the activity or process of laying a foundation; (2) a foundation understood as a beginning; (3) the act of begetting; and (4) the act of casting or throwing down.

When God creates the universe he does not do so only once and at a determinate point in time, but rather the act of creation is an ongoing, ceaseless activity that occurs at every moment of the world’s existence. Schelling enthusiastically entertained the notion of the continuous creation (*creatio continua*) in which God conserves the existence of the world with the same power that brought the world into being.⁴⁴ The laying of the foundation (*Grundlegung*) of the world in the *katabolē*, therefore, is a continuous and constant process, God’s activity of positing that which is other than him and of preserving that object in its existence (SW X: 366-367; SW XIV: 190).⁴⁵ Such a view corresponds perfectly with Schelling’s statement in the *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom* that creation should not be understood as an event or occurrence (*Begebenheit*) which occurs only once and then vanishes, but rather as an act (*Tat*), since the essence of creation is nothing other than God’s incessant creative activity (SW VII: 396).⁴⁶ Although the world is an object independent of and different from God, it cannot exist without being rooted in God’s act of creation, which is the genuine foundation of the world.

Yet when we speak of a foundation of the world, what exactly do we mean? The *katabolē* understood as a foundation implies a host of suggestive terms, all of which have the connotation of serving as an underlying reality, such as ground (*Grund*), subject (*subjectum*, *Unterwerfung*), substrate (*substratum*, *Unterlage*) and the *hypokeimenon* (*suppositum*, *ὑποκείμενον*). The product of God’s act of creation is a foundation or ground of created being, a reality that underlies the appearance of the world. When God becomes something different from himself in the *universio* and appears in exterior being, God lays the foundation for his own being because with the creation of that which is other than God, that is, an object, God is able to assert himself as a subject according to his true essence. In other words, by positing a being

⁴² See Schelling, *Grundlegung der positiven Philosophie*, 362-363; *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Zweites Buch: Der Philosophie der Offenbarung erster Teil*, SW XIII: 329; *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*, SW X: 324, 366; *Philosophie der Offenbarung, 1841/42*, 218-219; *System der Weltalter*, 171, 177-179, 205; *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung, Teilband 1*, 169, 249-251. See also Aldo Lanfranchi, *Krisis. Eine Lektüre der “Weltalter”-Texte F.W.J. Schellings* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 1992), 210-214.

⁴³ See the following passages for instances of this term: Matthew 13:35, 25:34; Luke 11:50; John 17:24; Hebrews 4:3, 9:26, 11:11; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8, 17:8.

⁴⁴ See Emilio Brito, “Création et temps dans la philosophie de Schelling,” *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 84 (1986): 377.

⁴⁵ Schelling, *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*, SW X: 366-367; *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Drittes Buch: Der Philosophie der Offenbarung zweiter Teil*, SW XIV: 190.

⁴⁶ Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 59-60: “The creation is not an occurrence but an act.”

that is different from himself, the context is established for God to be able to reveal himself in his truth. Light can only shine in the darkness and if there were no darkness then there would be no light. In the *universio* God occasions an inner-outer distinction in being: the inner, invisible truth of God's original unity and the outer, visible appearance of God in his dissimulated form. In one swift stroke God sets up this inner-outer dichotomy and both dimensions of being constitute the foundation of the world as well as the foundation of God's being. What we have here is a perceptible form of being that pertains to exteriority and a hidden, discreet reality that abides in an ungraspable interiority that buttresses the outer appearance.

With the laying of this foundation God makes it possible for the inner truth of creation to reveal itself *in contrast to* God's dissimulated appearance in exteriority. Truth, therefore, *can* shine forth against the background of brokenness and dissimulation since God's original will to create established the context of such a possibility. Accordingly, creation is pregnant with possibilities; it can be compared to a treasure chest that is just waiting to be unlocked, and a book which should not be admired simply for its cover, but which lies before us ready to be opened and its contents read voraciously. There is infinitely more to existence than what first meets the eye; the inner truth of the world needs to break through the outer appearance and to see the light of day.

Because the foundation of the world is full of possibilities for the truth to be revealed, it also has the quality of serving as a beginning or starting point of all that is new and unexpected. Schelling describes the essence of the world as fundamentally originative (*anfänglich*) because it comes into being *a potentia ad actum*—from potentiality into actuality—and hence is dependent on a higher source of being for its own subsistence (SW X: 344-345).⁴⁷ The world comes to be anew at every moment by virtue of its being grounded in God's inscrutable will to create. When we regard the world in its mere facticity, as a *factum brutum*, we have to ask ourselves whether the world is its own cause of being or whether the world owes its existence to some higher, antecedent source of being. Schelling answers that the presupposition of the world's existence is God's will to create, which cannot be discerned with the naked eye, but which nevertheless underlies the visible universe which we inhabit. Tapping into this inner domain of truth and coming to grasp it remains the most difficult undertaking known to man. How one comes to apprehend the true fact of the world and to understand the mystery of God's will rests ultimately in the hands of divine revelation, that is, in God's voluntary act of self-communication.

The creation of the universe is simultaneously the birth of the Son (SW XIII: 318).⁴⁸ God's plan to create something that is different from and other than him, but which remains in its inner core God himself, results in the begetting of the Son. The

⁴⁷ Schelling, *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*, SW X: 344-345.

⁴⁸ Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Zweites Buch: Der Philosophie der Offenbarung erster Teil*, SW XIII: 318; *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung, Teilband 1*, 170: "Der Begriff der Zeugung des Sohnes kann sich demnach nur auf sein Sein außer dem Vater beziehen. Das Sein außer dem Vater kann erst gedacht werden mit der Schöpfung: Der Anfang der Schöpfung ist der erste Moment der Zeugung, des aus sich Heraussetzens des Sohns."



Son is God, but not in the form of the Father, and hence the Son is a completely independent and free being. We should bear in mind that Schelling does not conceive of the birth of the Son as occurring with the creation of the *concrete* universe, but rather with the *spiritual* universe that precedes the actual material creation (SW XII: 109).⁴⁹ The act by which God creates the world in the *universio* and posits the tension is not a presuppositionless nor blind act because it is a mediated willing that takes place from all eternity through the Son (SW XIII: 323-324).⁵⁰ The Son has always been with the Father and plays an instrumental role in the creation of the universe. In this way Schelling holds the view of the eternal begetting of the Son (SW XIII: 323-324).⁵¹ It is important to notice that, although the Son is begotten of the Father, he is an independent person all his own in possession of his own free will. Begetting (*Zeugung*) is essentially an act by which something is produced which is both different from and similar to that which did the producing.⁵² Moreover, as Schelling explains, begetting includes the idea of ascribing an independent source of action to that which was begotten:

In general, that event is called begetting in which any being posits another [being] as independent from itself, incidentally as similar *to itself*, not *actual* in an immediate manner, but rather places it in necessity so that it can realize itself (*proprio actu*) (SW XIII: 324).⁵³

The being which is begotten does not appear all at once at the beginning of its existence as a full-fledged independent and unique entity, but must gradually become itself through the mediation of its own source of action. Just as human beings are born of their parents, enter the world as vulnerable infants and need to develop and mature over the course of many years before they can become truly independent persons, so too does the Son have to pass through a process of development before he becomes himself. Though the Son is begotten right at the beginning of creation he is only fully realized at the end of creation. In order for such a developmental process to take place the begotten being must be given over to the domain of otherness from the very start of its existence, so that it can exercise its own source of action and in this way grow into a fully independent being.

⁴⁹ Schelling, *Grundlegung der positiven Philosophie*, 361-363; *Philosophie der Mythologie, Erstes Buch: Der Monotheismus*, SW XII: 109.

⁵⁰ Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Zweites Buch: Der Philosophie der Offenbarung erster Teil*, SW XIII: 323-324.

⁵¹ Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Zweites Buch: Der Philosophie der Offenbarung erster Teil*, SW XIII: 323-324.

⁵² Aristotle picked up on this insight in his well-known adage that “man begets man.” See Aristotle, *De Anima* II, 4, 415a 26-27; *Metaphysics* VII, 7, 1032a 25 and IX, 8, 1049b 27-29.

⁵³ Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Zweites Buch: Der Philosophie der Offenbarung erster Teil*, SW XIII: 324: “Zeugung überhaupt wird der Vorgang genannt, in welchem irgend ein Wesen ein anderes von sich unabhängiges, ihm übrigens gleichartiges, nicht unmittelbar als *wirklich*, wohl aber in die Nothwendigkeit setzt sich selbst (*proprio actu*) zu verwirklichen.” English translation is mine.

Schelling calls this domain of otherness *necessity*, that realm of being which is different from the true essence of the creator and begetter which is freedom. The begotten being is, in a manner of speaking, handed over to necessity once it is born; one could even say that it is abandoned to the world. This is why Schelling conceives of begetting not as a positing (*Setzung*), but as an exclusion (*Ausschließung, exclusio*), an idea that fits well with the conception of begetting as an expulsion of being (*ein Hinaussetzen des Seins*) (SW XIII: 324).⁵⁴ Creation, as we have seen, begins in God's imposing will to dissimulate his true essence in pure exteriority. This exterior being in effect excludes all other types of being and asserts itself as absolute. What we are able to see now is that creation needs to begin in this act of exclusion—in this act of begetting—in order to allow for the possibility for the hegemony of exterior being to be overcome by the self-generated act of that which is begotten that reveals the true interiority. Only by abandoning that which is begotten to the alienation of the outer world can it struggle and assert itself against exclusive being and in the process claim its own independent existence.

Schelling was positively receptive to Dionysius the Areopagite's doctrine of the persons of the Trinity as begetting each other (SW XIII: 323).⁵⁵ Since the Father begets the Son, the Father is described as the divinity who begets God (*die Gott zeugende Gottheit*) and the Son is referred to as the divinity who was begotten as God (*die Gott gezeugte Gottheit*); and the Spirit is begotten from both the Father and the Son.⁵⁶ Although there are instances in the New Testament where *katabolé* means begetting, such as in Hebrews 11:11, the conception of God as a begetter is not completely faithful to the Judaeo-Christian tradition. As Harry Wolfson points out, it was the ancient Greeks in their popular religion who developed the notion of God as a begetter, whereas in Judaism the prevailing idea was that of God conceived of as an artisan.⁵⁷ The Greeks were keen to understand their gods on the analogy with animals and human beings who beget by a process of natural generation other beings which are similar to them. On the other hand, the Jews strove to maintain the dissimilarity between God and the world, as evidenced in the scriptural account of creation in which God fashions a world that is unlike him, just as an artisan builds his own work that has an existence which is completely other than the artisan. Christianity, therefore, having arisen out of Judaism, at first adhered to the conception of God as

⁵⁴ Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Zweites Buch: Der Philosophie der Offenbarung erster Teil*, SW XIII: 324: "Die Zeugung besteht vielmehr in einer Ausschließung (*exclusio*) als in einem Setzen, aber eben dieses Ausschließen gibt das rein Seyende, das, weil es dieß ist, sich selbst nicht hat, *sich selbst*, setzt es als für sich seyende Potenz, und gerade die Negation gibt ihm die Kraft, die es für sich selbst und ohne Vermittlung einer Negation gar nicht finden könnte, die Kraft *actu* zu seyn; *actu* nämlich kann es nur seyn, indem es den ihm entgegenstehenden Actus (den aktivgewordene Willen, der eigentlich ruhen, nicht wirken sollte) wieder zur Potenz überwindet, und dadurch sich selbst zum reinen Actus wieder herstellt, wo es dann nicht mehr bloß das Gezeugte des Vaters ist, sondern - der Sohn (der eigentliche Ausdruck, der sich für dieses Verhältniß finden läßt)." See also *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung, Teilband 1*, 165.

⁵⁵ Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Zweites Buch: Der Philosophie der Offenbarung erster Teil*, SW XIII: 323; *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung, Teilband 1*, 162-163.

⁵⁶ Schelling, *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung, Teilband 1*, 157-158.

⁵⁷ Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 288-289.



an artisan and not as a begetter.⁵⁸ However, this initial conception was modified to make room for the notion of God as a begetter in the light of reflection concerning the birth of Jesus Christ who was proclaimed to be the Son of God.⁵⁹ Therefore, God came to be understood as the begetter of both the earthly Jesus as well as the pre-existent heavenly Christ. In general, then, within the Christian tradition God is conceived as an artisan with respect to the creation of the world and all things, but appears as a begetter only in relation to the Son or Logos, Jesus Christ.⁶⁰

Finally, as an extension of the foregoing meditation, *katabolé* also has the meaning of throwing or casting downwards (*Niederverfung, dejicere, deorsum jacere*). In the act of creation God expels being from interiority and consigns it to exteriority in the tension of the potencies. Furthermore, the Son is handed over or abandoned to this outside-divine being which is the context where he fully realizes his independence from the Father. In pursuing this line of thinking even further, the Father can be conceived of as throwing the Son downwards into the outside-divine being and excluding the Son from the original unity that constitutes God's eternal peace.⁶¹ The Son is torn and separated from the Father and hurled into the domain of exterior being. In order for this alienation from the Father and the Son's independence to be actual, this *katabolé* must be the creation of the material universe which is the complete realization of the schism between the Father and the Son. The point to recognize here is that the act of throwing down in the *katabolé* is not a merely symbolic or spiritual act, but is a real act that results in the birth of nature and the Son's utter abandonment unto the concrete universe. Through the *katabolé* the Father entrusts the outside-divine being to the Son.⁶² Thus in the spirit of Martin Heidegger we can rightly describe the nature of created being as thrown (*geworfen*).⁶³

The creation of the material universe is in itself an irrefutable sign of the overcoming of the Father's egoistic will by the Son's will of love. As we have already seen, the first potency, which is nothing other than the Father's will, expressed itself in the acceptance of the exclusive or outside-divine being, that domain of being that is steeped in pure exteriority to the complete exclusion of interiority. This original selfish willing is not yet the birth of the material world because in order for matter to be there must be a space of interiority. The only way that matter can be created is if the first will in its exclusive affirmation of exteriority can be overcome by a second

⁵⁸ Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 292.

⁵⁹ Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 292.

⁶⁰ Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 293-294. Schelling was well aware of the traditional distinction between begetting (*gignere*) and creating (*creare*) which is demonstrated in his quoting the theological doctrine "*gignere est naturae: creare voluntatis*." The Son was begotten by the Father by nature, whereas all other things were created by God's will. See Schelling, *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung, Teilband 1*, 167-168.

⁶¹ Schelling, *System der Weltalter*, 177-179.

⁶² Schelling, *System der Weltalter*, 205: "Dieses Sein ist vor aller Schöpfung, die Schöpfung fängt erst an mit der κατὰβολή, wo der Vater das Sein dem Sohne gemein macht."

⁶³ See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 219-224.

will that opposes this exteriority with an interiority. The first principle must be transformed internally for concrete matter to arise at all.

Using very suggestive language, Schelling describes this process of materialization as the first principle submitting itself to a higher second principle (SW X: 324-326, 366).⁶⁴ The first will has to make itself subservient to or be placed under (*Unterwerfung*) the higher second will which is manifested by the Son.⁶⁵ Matter can only come into being if a higher potency than the original first potency asserts itself and can overcome the hegemony of pure exteriority by transforming the first potency internally. The will of the Son challenges the peremptory will of the Father and has as his single aim to defeat the exclusivity of the outside-divine being by allowing for true inner being to reveal itself. Exclusive being, therefore, is overcome in the act of *katabolé* through the subordination of the outer being under the inner will of the Son. This idea of God the Father making himself subservient to the will of his Son, which acts as the leitmotif of the doctrine of creation, alludes to the doctrine expounded by Johann Georg Hamann that God created the world in humility.⁶⁶ By lowering himself and submitting himself to his Son's will God allowed for creation to take place. God's having cast his Son into the outside-divine being and having entrusted this outer domain of being to him signifies the absolute trust that the Father had in the Son, so much so that God actually abandoned himself to the Son. The true fact of creation is embedded in a divine humility, a lowering of oneself and the submission under a higher will that the Father undertook when he cast his Son into the outside-divine being in the *katabolé*.

With this concept of the materialization of the first principle and the creation of the concrete universe we arrive at the centrally important idea of overcoming (*Überwindung*). The principal aim of philosophy, Schelling tells us, is to overcome the world, meaning that the superficial, outer appearance of the world has to be surpassed and the inner truth of creation grasped. The act of overcoming directly pertains to the understanding of the true fact of the world, in not seeing the world simply as an inert, eternal, and meaningless object, but as an expression of divine love and humility—in short, the product of a divine creation. Now, in light of our foregoing discussion, we are able to better understand in what precisely the act of overcoming consists, namely, in enabling the domain of interiority to reveal itself and to disperse the all-encroaching exclusive or outside-divine being.

Such a revelation of interiority can only happen through the act of the will, when an independent being asserts itself through its own willing. Furthermore, such a willing must not be arbitrary or a willing for its own sake, but needs to be attuned to the truth of the world which is always something inner. This truth is nothing other than the will of the Son who made it possible for the world to be created through his overcoming of the imperious will of the Father in the *universio*. The conclusion that

⁶⁴ Schelling, *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*, SW X: 324-326, 366.

⁶⁵ Schelling, *System der Weltalter*, 177.

⁶⁶ See John R. Betz, "Hamann's London Writings: The Hermeneutics of Trinitarian Condescension," *Pro Ecclesia* 14 (2005): 191-234.



we can draw from this fact is that the possibility of overcoming the world, which is the proper goal of philosophy, is actually grounded in the primordial reality of the world's already having been overcome by the Son. Thus, the human being does not overcome the world through his own doing or on the strength of the autonomous affirmation of his own will, but rather by means of coming to an awareness of the truth of the world which is that it has been already overcome by the Son and is at bottom a creation of God. Schelling offers his insightful interpretation of the concept of overcoming in the following passage:

The question could already always arise, as often as one spoke about an "overcoming" of the first [principle], how then is such an overcoming at all possible? To this we can answer that just as nothing can truly resist than a will and so just as nothing can be truly unovercomable than only a will, conversely and from the other side also nothing can be overcomable than only the will, and so there is then nothing overcomable than the will; and only because that primordial principle is a *will*, is it precisely for this reason also something which is *capable* of [undergoing] overcoming.⁶⁷

It goes without saying that the only way that the world can be overcome is if it is in the first place *overcomable*. In our concrete, temporal situation the project of overcoming the world must rest on the intrinsically overcomable nature of the world, that is, on the fact that the world by its very nature *can* be overcome. But what does this mean? The essence of the world must be of such a nature that it can be overcome. But the world offers resistance and stands before us as a seemingly impregnable object that quashes all human attempts to subdue it. Resistance, Schelling informs us, consists in nothing other than willing, and since the world offers resistance, this must mean that there is a will at work behind this mundane force opposing human action (SW XIV: 168; SW XII: 87).⁶⁸ Because this resistance is essentially a willing, it is for this reason overcomable, since only the will can be overcome. However, by simply explaining the essence of the world as a will that can be overcome this does not paint a true picture of the situation at hand because to leave it as such is to suggest that though the world is overcomable, the actual overcoming of the world is something that the human being carries out himself through his self-initiated, autonomous action. This would imply that the possibility preceded the actual reality of the

⁶⁷ Schelling, *Grundlegung der positiven Philosophie*, 367: "Es konnte schon immer, so oft von einer 'Überwindung' des Ersten die Rede war, die Frage entstehen, wie denn eine solche Überwindung überhaupt möglich sei? Hierauf ist zu antworten, dass, gleich wie nichts wahrhaft widerstehen kann als ein Wille, und so, wie nichts wahrhaft unüberwindlich als nur ein Wille sein kann, hinwiederum und von der anderen Seite auch nichts überwindlich sein kann als nur der Wille, und so gibt es denn nichts Überwindliches als den Willen, und nur weil jenes Urprincip ein *Wille* ist, nur darum ist es auch ein der Überwindung *Fähiges*." English translation is mine.

⁶⁸ Schelling, *Einleitung in die Philosophie*, 109; *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Drittes Buch: Der Philosophie der Offenbarung zweiter Teil*, SW XIV: 168; *Philosophie der Mythologie, Zweites Buch: Der Monotheismus*, SW XII: 87: "Nun ist in der Welt nichts, das *widersteht*, als ein Wollen (alle Widerstandskraft besteht nur in einem Wollen), und so wie nichts widersteht als ein Wollen, so ist auch nichts überwindlich als ein Wollen."

overcoming. The inadequacy of this portrayal hinges on a particular understanding of the idea of possibility. For the world to be overcome does not mean that it lies ready to be overcome, but rather that this possibility ushers from a more primordial reality of the world's already having been overcome.⁶⁹ This overcoming was performed by the Son in the *katabolē* that occasioned the birth of the concrete universe. Thus, the simple fact that the world exists and that creation took place is in itself proof enough that the world has been overcome.

What should be evident by now in our investigation is that the understanding of the essence of the world wavers between two poles, namely, the mere outer fact and the true inner fact of the world. At stake here are two radically different interpretations of the world's essence. When act and true insight are absent from the human being's life the world is experienced as an eternal and meaningless conglomeration of matter that rotates in a never-ending circular orbit in its one present time. On the other hand, when the resistance inherent in the world is overcome in human action then the world is understood as something much more than simply inert matter without an ultimate goal. The central conviction operative in Schelling's late philosophy is that only with the insight into the true fact of the world—what the true and not merely apparent essence of the world is—can the human being be genuinely free and be empowered to act. As both Christian Danz and Rafael Hüntelmann claim, true freedom comes about from the belief in God's free creation.⁷⁰ The truth of the world is that it is a creation of God, and the moment one comprehends this reality—for creation is an ontological reality that has its being independent of any human influence—is when genuine freedom takes root in the human will. For Schelling, truth is undeniably related to the will and in the act of surpassing the level of appearances to penetrate to a foundational reality.

⁶⁹ To use an analogy, one does not describe a particular boxer as beatable if he has never lost a fight in his life; he only comes to be labelled beatable if someone has actually beaten him and proven that he can indeed be defeated. Similarly, the only way that the world can be overcome is if it has already been overcome, with the reality of its having been overcome preceding and underlying its subsequent possibility.

⁷⁰ Christian Danz, *Die philosophische Christologie F. W. J. Schellings* (Stuttgart und Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 1996), 41; Rafael Hüntelmann, *Schellings Philosophie der Schöpfung. Zur Geschichte des Schöpfungsbegriffs* (Dettelbach: Röhl, 1995), 223.

