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

Nikolaj Zunic

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 (*Sämmtliche 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

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[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 (Münchner Vorlesung WS 1832/33 und SS 1833)*, ed. Horst Fuhrmans (Torino: Bottega D'Erasmo, 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 Volesung 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

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[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, sondernin 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 Geschlechtigkeit. 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 ersteht 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 Geschöpfs) 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 Duas 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

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[14] Schelling, *System der Weltalter*, 161: "*Diese Freiheit ein Anderer zu sein* ist die erste Voraussezung 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.

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[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 (*Zerreißung*), 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 (κατά τινα οἰχονομίαν, *kata tina oichonomian*) when something is exhibited in its outer form or appearance that is different from that which is intended

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[21] F. W. J. Schelling, *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung. Part 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 ἐναντίων (*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

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[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. Part 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. Part 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

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[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 εἰχών τοὺ Θεοὺ τοὺ ἀορἀτου [*eichōn tou Theou tou aoratou*], 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 (ἀπαυγάσμα,[*apaugásma*]) of God's glory.[41]

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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 (ἀπαυγάσμα, *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 *katabolé* 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 *katabolé* (καταβολή) is borrowed from the New Testament where it normally appears in the phrase "the foundation of the world" (καταβολή τοῦ κοσμοῦ, *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 *katabolé*, 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 *katabolé* 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* (ὑποκείμενον, *suppositum*). 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

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[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. Part 1*, 169, 249-251. See also Aldo Lanfranconi, *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

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[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. Part 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.

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[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

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[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 aktivgewordenene 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. Part 1*, 165.

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

[56] Schelling, *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung. Part 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 (*Niederwerfung*, *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

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[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. Part1*, 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 καταβολή, 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

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[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

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[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 overcomable 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 *katabolé* 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.

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[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: Röll, 1995), 223.

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Matter and its Topological Operations in Schelling's Science of Reason

Carlos Zorrilla Piña

> *Hephaestus stands over them with his mending tools, asking … "Is this your heart's desire, then—for the two of you to become parts of the same whole, as near as can be, and never to separate, day or night? Because if that's your desire, I'd like to weld you together and join you into something that is naturally whole, so that the two of you are made into one.*
>
> —Plato, *Symposium*

"The darkest of all things" (SW II: 359), "the cliff upon which all false systems founder from the outset" (SW II: 223), "the crisis of consciousness" (SW XIV: 210), "maybe the hardest of all metaphysical concepts" (SW X: 310), and even "the *σκανδαλον* [*skandalon*], that is: the pitfall, of philosophy" (SW XI: 424)[1]—these are some of the epithets that Schelling reserves for matter in a philosophical itinerary that stretches from 1794 to 1854 and which never ceases to make the former's thematization a central point of its efforts. For Schelling, the motivation to constantly revisit the investigation concerning the essence of matter is not only commanded by

[1] Most citations from Schelling's works stem from K.F.A. Schelling's edition of the *Sämmtliche Werke* (Stuttgart & Augsburg: J. G. Cotta'scher Verlag, 1856–1861). Where this is not the case, full bibliographical information is provided. All translations from Schelling's works are my own.

the latter's apparently inherent refractoriness, but even more importantly by the conviction that, "without knowledge of it physics is without a scientific basis, [and] the science of reason deprived of the bond whereby the Idea is connected to actuality" (SW II: 359). The present paper aims to make an initial contribution to the elucidation of the obscurity that engulfs matter, specifically insofar as it relates to the notion of ground and plays a role in the above-quoted "science of reason," i.e., the negative or purely *a priori* component of Schelling's philosophy.

Insofar as it focuses on matter's role within the purely rational philosophy, this paper mostly limits its inquiries to those nascent powers which in *The Deities of Samothrace*, Schelling called the *hephaistoi*: the first worldly or natural forces, akin to an ambivalent fire that stirs in the depths and whose nature it would be to break forth violently and blindly, though if persuaded into control by a purposive principle, it can also contain itself in order to be the seat for the ever higher configurations that succeed it. On the one hand, this means that the considerations which follow must proceed *de profundis*, from the lowest. On the other hand, it means that at stake are a schematic according to species—*κατ' εἴδη* (*kat' eide*)—and insight into the *how* of the craft and toil which forge this world, rather than an answer to the abysmal question of *why* a world is forged in the first place. Moreover, given Schelling's longstanding conviction that the first in time is not the highest but only that which comes before the highest as its groundwork, and that the higher—the spiritual—can only exist as actual in virtue of its triumph and assertion over and against the lower, then any and all thematization of matter—insofar as the latter is characterized as the first expression of being, or the *primum Existens*[2]—must necessarily lead to a consideration of the law of the ground (*Gesetz des Grundes*).[3] And this law itself, whose crucial role in Schelling's enlargement of his philosophical focus to include the purview of freedom is all too well known, must be understood both as having matter as its first actual instantiation, and as having its subsequent operations work *on* matter and in that sense arising out of the possibilities accorded *by* matter. For in the end, it is, as Schelling says, that "in matter qua *primum Existens* all potencies are contained, if not according to their actuality, still according to their possibility" (SW IV: 150). And while it is true that no matter may actually exist if not a formed matter, it is no less true, as will be seen, that no form is possible if not by means of a reconstruction which, because it releases matter from excess, "must work destructively on everything that is constructed" (SW IV: 53). Or to go back to mythic language, that anything that may attain actuality, whether the earth or the subtlest theory about the earth, must pass through the languorous and incandescent strokes of Hephaistos' forge, for only "through the attenuation of fire everything first introduced itself into this world" (SW VIII: 352).

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[2] This is a designation first used in 1801 in Schelling's *Presentation of my System of Philosophy* (SW IV: 144), but one by which he explicitly stands in later works, for example in his 1843 *Presentation of the Process of Nature* (SW X: 308).

[3] As will be seen, this intimate relation between matter and ground is further supported through the demonstrable connection each of them has to Schelling's understanding of the law of identity. See SW VII: 346. Cf. also Schelling's defense of the operation of this law in his 1812 open letter to Eschenmayer (SW VIII: 169 ff.).

In Schelling's eyes, indeed, the resolution not to let philosophy founder at the cliff that is matter is at one with that of not acquiescing either in the excision of nature from theory or in the baseless pretension that our philosophical standpoint can be indifferent to the ontological conditions of its own natural groundedness. For him, the problem with the Kantian ambition of offering a critique of reason understood merely as an examination of the subject's cognitive apparatus is that "the cognitive faculty or reason itself remained incomprehensible and opaque, because this so-called apparatus was again not conceived out of reason itself, but was given from outside" (SW XIII: 57). As a corrective to this, Schelling's own rational philosophy, with its insistence on the "often misunderstood" principle of "absolute identity of the real and the ideal" (SW VII: 31, 422), consisted not in a reversion to pre-critical metaphysics but rather in an attempt to correct the denatured one-sidedness of the Kantian (and, albeit in a different sense, Fichtean) subjectivist approach to the question concerning the possibility of knowledge. Thus, in general terms, rather than exclusively asking under what conditions the subject can have knowledge of what exists, his philosophy effectuated a genetic "turn into the objective" (SW XI: 373) and matched that with the complementary questions: Under what conditions can there be something which exists? And how could that which exists raise itself to the complexity of the subject of knowledge which then makes the rest of existence into its object? It is in precisely this sense that Gabriel has talked about the German Idealists—Schelling among them—as offering a 'transcendental ontology' that amounts to an examination of the "constitution of transcendental constitution,"[4] and that Wirth has characterized Schelling's philosophy as uncovering "the metacritical possibility of any critical project."[5]

Such as Schelling understood it, the ambition of the science of reason is thus to fully and systematically give an account of how it may come to be that "reason stands opposed only to reason itself and is as much the knower as the known" (SW XIII: 57).[6] The possibility of this project, however, depends on finding a way of unitarily thematizing the subjective and the objective in a manner that satisfies the minimal conditions that the *Stuttgart Seminars* set forth: namely, in an organic, dynamical, and non-reductive way (SW VII: 421). And that is exactly where matter and grounding come in. As that which discharges the role of the system's first existent, matter needs to provide the means whereby those precise systemic demands can in due course be met. This is exactly why matter cannot be straightaway equivalent to the somatic, but must rather be a matrix for both the somatic and for that which is opposed to and elevated above the merely somatic. It is, in other words, exactly why matter must be one of those "middle concepts" that Schelling claims are "the most important, indeed, the only ones that truly explain anything in science" (SW VIII: 282).

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[4] Markus Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology* (London: Continuum, 2011), xii.

[5] Jason Wirth, "Translator's Introduction," in F.W.J. Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), xxi.

[6] This identity of knower and known was explicitly recognized in the draft of the 1804 *System of Philosophy as a Whole and of the Philosophy of Nature in Particular* (SW VI: 137).

Following Schelling, the thematization of matter can be undertaken from at least three complementary perspectives, though all of them ultimately dynamical: (1) A preponderantly objective—force-based—approach which emphasizes the need to explain all of the properties and operations of things in nature from the process of construction of matter itself, thus doing away with the *ad hoc* postulation of occult qualities;[7] (2) A preponderantly subjective, transcendental approach which focuses on exhibiting the reasons why the ideal determinations of a knowing subject's consciousness are identical to—albeit not causally determined by—correlative objective determinations; (3) A properly rational thematization which draws on the previous two but focuses on the construction of matter out of the essence that stems from the absolute identity of reason qua medium of position. Drawing their guidance from a constellation of Schelling's works, though chief among them the 1843 *Presentation of the Process of Nature*, the considerations which follow privilege the third of these approaches. They pursue their course through three main moments, of which little needs to be said in advance other than that hopefully their relevance to the considerations finally submitted as conclusions will become self-evident. Beyond this, I am fully aware that this paper will speak only to those who, like me, are in agreement with Grant's characterization of Schelling as "the most consistent metaphysician of the last century"[8] and with McGrath's recent elaboration of that characterization by insisting that this consistency is given by "the principles that govern Schelling's thinking in all of its many phases—the objectivity of reason, the principle of ground, the dialectic of indifference and differentiation …"[9] From such convictions alone can the overall project of Schellingian philosophy to the extent that it presents itself negatively as a systematic science of reason, as well as the role played in that project by matter in its intimate connection to the law of the ground, be understood.[10]

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[7] One should not, in other words, conflate the broader (Platonic) notion of a dynamic principle with that of force. The concept of force is indeed a particular instantiation of a dynamic principle, but it is necessarily circumscribed to a certain level of philosophical thematization. For Schelling, the concept of a simple force which is one-sidedly taken as the explanatory ground of a phenomenon is "a purely formal concept, generated by reflection," given that it "denotes a relation of one-sided causality, which is objectionable for philosophy" (SW II: 198). This is why Schelling's ontological dynamics would gradually move away from the notion of force in favor of that of principle, though emphatically preserving the lessons drawn from his force-based nature-philosophy. "It is not too harsh to judge," he asserts, "that, once the dynamic spirit has been awakened, any philosophizing that does not draw its strength from it can only be regarded as an empty abuse of the noble gift of speaking and thinking" (SW VIII: 199).

[8] Iain Hamilton Grant, *Philosophies of Nature After Schelling* (London: Continuum, 2008), viii.

[9] Sean J. McGrath, "Is the Late Schelling Still Doing Nature-Philosophy?," *Angelaki, Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 21, no. 4 (2016), 121–41: 137. Note that the term 'phase' (*φάσις*) should primordially be understood in its original sense as 'aspect,' not as 'period.'

[10] As in Plato (who from beginning to end remains Schelling's most privileged interlocutor), the unity that governs Schelling's natural growth and production of new insight operates not as a mere median point between diverging extremes, but on the contrary as the focal point which generates them following an organic logic. The notions of matter and ground are crucial to that logic. Cf. Barbarić's assessment that, "It is perhaps no overstatement to say that the problem of matter, in all its manifold inner complexities, constitutes the very center of Schelling's philosophy." Damir Barbarić, "Schellings Platon-Interpretation in der Darstellung der reinrationalen philosophie," *Das Antike Denken in der Philosophie Schellings*, ed. Rainer Adolphi, Jörg Jantzen (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 2004), 77–98: 13.

I

Though apparently following in the footsteps of Kant's *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, Schelling's construction of matter—from its earliest presentation in the 1797 *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*—should be distinguished from the Kantian one on at least two counts. First, Schelling holds true to the viability of the project of a dynamical construction of matter capable of rationally anticipating the latter's formative potential—a possibility which Kant had rather surrendered in his acquiescence to the Newtonian determination of mechanical efficacy as a function of the mere quantity of homogenous parts integrating a body. Second, and intimately connected to the first, for Schelling matter is to be the first echelon of a nature of which it is asked not that it "coincide by chance with the laws of our mind … but rather that *it itself* not only *express* but *even realize* the laws of our mind necessarily and originally" (SW II: 55–56). Even guided by these convictions, however, Schelling's first nature-philosophical works still emulated the general procedure of Kant's account, relying exclusively on the two basic forces of attraction and repulsion to explain matter's filling of space to the exclusion of any foreign intrusion. Had it not been for the lucid—and yet still largely under-appreciated—contributions of Franz Baader, Schelling may never have been able to find the way beyond the subjectivist reductions he so much desired to undo.

After having welcomed Schelling's *On the World-Soul* as a felicitous waking up from the "death-slumber of atomism,"[11] Baader pointed out the unviability of constructing matter from exclusively two forces. A two-force construction, he argued, ultimately surrenders matter to a haphazard aggregation of a multiplicity of homogenous, mutually external parts and fails to recognize the intensive degree which must objectively belong to matter if it is to be capable of developing formal determinations otherwise than by receiving them as regulative projections. It is this intensively-couched, unitary organizing principle in each existent that Baader conceives as its specific gravity and which—in departing from all previous theorizations of nature—he rigorously distinguishes from the efficacious, motion-inducing force of attraction. Subsisting at an internal remove from the spatial externality of material existence, gravity first makes the latter possible insofar as it provides the unifying medium for the other two forces and, without itself directly manifesting, serves as the "common ground of their definite and persistent presence" (SW III: 258).[12]

It is thanks to Baader, indeed, that Kant's all too hasty identification of the *substantia phaenomenon* with matter is shifted to gravity. And since each individual existent's degree of specific gravity is drawn from a common or systemic well of essence, structurally obeying what Schelling will later call a "*universal reciprocal*

[11] Baader, Franz, *On the Pythagorean Square in Nature, or the Four World-Regions*, in *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. F. Hoffmann, 16 vols. (Leipzig: Herrmann Bethmann Verlag, 1851–1860), III: 249.
[12] Baader, *On the Pythagorean Square*, SW III: 258.

distribution," (SW IV: 36),[13] then that degree also determines the existent's preponderance or capacity for self-determination in the face of alterity. Physically, that preponderance plays itself out as inertial mass, whose manifestation as the resistance to extrinsic impulsion not only provides the material existent with its share of mechanical autonomy, but does so in a manner that is rational and rule-bound, given that it obeys the total conservation of a distributive value. The key insight is thus that without the background or backdrop of gravity no material existent could be placed in a medium beyond its own self-containment, occupying a position alongside other beings in a milieu of common, rule-bound ex-istence. In short, no unitary ground of existence, no existence. Hence no being can be determined in isolation, since ultimately it is the whole which is ontologically prior to the part and every part is determined in its being as a function of its role in the whole.[14] By 1799, in the *First Outline of a System of Naturephilosophy*, Schelling had heeded Baader's precisions and likewise insisted on the specificity of a third principle as "that which binds the individual to a certain system of things and assigns it its place in the universe" (SW III: 265). Giving an incipient formulation of his celebrated ground/existence distinction, and a clear intimation that all its subsequent or higher deployments must nonetheless remain rooted in a properly understood natural ontology, he insisted that, "matter manifests only through gravity; there may be an imponderable matter, but it does not manifest" (SW III: 267).[15]

It is nonetheless crucial to note that Schelling's true contribution is not so much to have first diagnosed the operation of the ground—as is often claimed—but much rather to have (quite literally) elucidated the means by which the possible configurations that the ground delineates can be drawn out into actuality by the higher operation of light, giving birth to a matter *imaginatively*[16] formed out of its own

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[13] Strictly speaking—and this should be of no small interest to contemporary science—it is not gravity per se which is distributed in Schelling's account, but rather only attraction (and thereby, indirectly, repulsion). The degree of specific gravity is therefore much rather the distributor than the distributed. Indeed, as condition of multiplicity, gravity cannot itself be multiple. This is to say, while it grounds the zero-sum distribution of essence from which concrete multiple existents can result, gravity itself remains perpetually one and undivided, at a remove from all that appears and which consequently must be susceptible to quantity. Cf. Schelling, SW II: 364 ff.; VI: 257.

[14] That Baader's overhaul of Kant's merely Newtonian notion of gravity constitutes the first steps towards a naturalization of the otherwise still all too logical principle of thoroughgoing determination (*Critique of Pure Reason*, A571/B599) can only here be touched in passing.

[15] For an earlier, but even more inchoate hint, consider the following passage from Schelling's Timaeus Commentary of 1794, which at once opens up the distinction to the dimension of its Platonic lineage: "Concerning the assertion that: νοῦν χωρὶς ψυχῆς ὐυδὲποτε παραγιγνέσθαι [*noûn chorìs psuchês óudépote paragignésthai*] It is impossible for anything to come to possess intelligence apart from soul], it means as much as: Understanding has for itself no causality, should it therefore become visible in any one thing, then this cannot happen otherwise than if it is connected to a principle of actuality." F.W.J. Schelling, *"Timaeus" (1794)*, ed. Hartmut Buchner (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1994), 29.

[16] Beginning in 1802, in the dialogue *Bruno*, Schelling introduces the notion of *Ineinsbildung* (along with cognates *Einbildung*, *Hineinbildung*, etc.). I will leave for another opportunity both a consideration of the difficulties this term presents the translator, as well as a deeper look into the meaning of this all-important ontological operator. For now, I simply register the conviction that the speculative depth of Schellingian imagination—or *coadunation*, or *in-formation*—is not fully sounded if not thought together in its connection

potential basis. Adamantly resisting the conflation of arithmetic variations in weight with qualitative differences,[17] Schelling argued that while gravity may fix an existent's overall physical preponderance, only light's exponential reworking of the essential basis provided by gravity could explain how that preponderance may manifest in the ideal terms of an internal complexity. While gravity thus strives to make the totality of existents one by binding them in the motions their specific weights occasion in one another, light in turn strives to make each existent a concrete totality of the overarching unity, i.e., optimally reflective of that totality because incorporating it into its own determinate being by way of reorganizing its disposed essence for the sake of representative preponderance. And it is this essential imaginative collaboration of gravity and light, Schelling insists, which alone may first deliver an existent in its requisite determination: both in terms of its presence, as well as of its capacity to represent other presences. The articulation of this imaginative exponentiation of the basis of existence in the direction of higher forms of self-determination admittedly followed up on advances made by Baader,[18] but was for the first time clearly and rigorously expounded by Schelling's 1800 *General Deduction of the Dynamical Process*.

Of course, this conception of matter's capacity for autonomous formation by way of the imaginative collaboration between a real basis and an ideal actualizing principle is developed under the guiding conviction that if "the system of nature is at the same time the system of our mind" it cannot be because the latter would be "*projected* onto nature" (SW II: 39, 55) but rather because the very identity of both is ultimately at one with the self-elevation of the former unto the latter. Accordingly, it should not be surprising that it continues to be operative at the heart of Schelling's thought once its focus shifts toward the very logic—or indeed ligature—of the identity: "that secret bond" (SW II: 55) holding those two domains of nature and mind together. A better understanding of this, and of why Schelling submits that matter expresses the same bond that reason does—namely "that between the infinite and finite" (SW II: 360)—is therefore given by turning to Schelling's consideration of the identity formula A=A, which for him constitutes the "highest law of reason" (SW IV: 116).

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to insights of a mathematical nature. It is not a coincidence that the philosophical exhibition of complex relations is possible only by means of the ontological imagination of the real and the ideal, while in mathematics the real numbers remain a unidimensional infinity unless they are articulated into the complex numbers, which however is possible only by means of the imaginary unit (i) and the relations this latter bears to e (= 2.71828…), a number which is famously tied to growth, but also, as the Leibnizian construction of the catenary shows, to gravitation and the pull of the ground.

[17] For example in *On the True Concept of Nature-philosophy and the Correct Manner of Solving its Problems* (SW IV: 100).

[18] Among countless other sources of insight for subsequent thinkers, Baader's seminal 1797 *Contributions to Elemental Physiology* include a distinction between the modes of operation (*Wirkungsweisen*) of the essence which goes into finite natural existents (Cf. Baader, SW III: 211), an acknowledgement of the interiority with which all existence whatsoever is endowed (III: 216), a nonetheless clear warning that not all interiority amounts to an essence's enjoyment of selfhood (III: 219), as well as that those essences whose interiority does indeed get reworked into selfhood stand at an exponential remove from the merely linear relations of external essences (III: 215).

II

In a move that follows, and explicitly credits Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre,* Schelling's 1801 *Presentation of my System of Philosophy*, as well as the accompanying *Further Presentations from the System of Philosophy*, from a year later, assert that the identity proposition establishes not the being of the *relata* of which it consists, but rather only that of identity itself. For while abstraction can be made from the actual content of the subject and predicate in the formula, the self-sameness of the milieu or medium wherein they are posited—in this case unconditioned reason rather than egoic consciousness—cannot be abstracted from; and to that extent is absolutely asserted.[19] The being that is within reason, in other words, and which alone is a being in-and-for-itself because it is *ex hypothesi* at the indifference point between both the subjective and the objective, is the being of absolute identity itself. No essence or ontological quota whatsoever is thus in reason if not that which streams from absolute identity. Whatever may subsequently be said to be within the purview of the *a priori* system of reason can only be said to be in virtue of being an expression of absolute identity, or of the indifference point between the subjective and the objective. And so, because it stands for the being outside of which there can be no other being, this one common essence is characterized as for itself akin to infinity.

But because absolute identity amounts to the nexus or *copula* of a certain relation—even if a self-relation, viz. that of reason as identical to itself—then it is, and

[19] Cf. SW IV: 116. In passing: the much debated issue of what is truly ideal about that "ideal part of philosophy" which Schelling promises to be addressing for the first time in earnest with his 1809 *Philosophical Investigations*, is to be brought back to this characterization of reason as that wherein A=A holds. What Schelling does in 1801 and subsequent works is to rely on the assumption that one can take this self-sameness of reason qua medium of position for granted, and indeed in such a way as to make it into the principle whose unpacking may yield content and form both for the system that will be constructed on its basis as well as for its discrete components. As will be seen below, it is from the identity proposition, qua highest law of reason as self-same, that Schelling extracts both the ontological capital to be expended through differential distribution, as well as the differential criteria according to which this distribution can occur: to wit, first the distinction between subject and predicate, from which in turn (via the doubling of identity) the difference between subject and object is extracted, and this latter in such a way that in its first instantiation (matter) all of the ones that will follow are already potentially, yet necessarily, contained. All Schelling needs to get his entire systemic construction going, in other words, is for the self-sameness of reason to be granted as the necessary, unquestioned departure point. What he does in 1809, however, and even more explicitly in the drafts of the *Ages of the World*, is to submit even that basic assumption to a critical examination, asking whether it is itself consequent upon something else. Needless to say, for reasons which cannot be explored here, Schelling concludes that if the presentation is to be philosophically informative at all, not only can that self-sameness of reason not be taken for granted; in addition, it must ultimately be recognized that no other justification can be given for it other than the radically free decision whereby the cohesion of identity is secured through the bond of love alone (cf. SW VII: 408). Thus, both the things and the very system which receive their necessary determinations thanks to absolute identity are thereby subjected to an irreducible antecedent contingency: the non-necessary release of the world to be caught up in the nets of reason (cf. SW X: 143). Nature itself can only be awarded a "derived absoluteness" (SW VII: 347). And that "eternal past" which was never present but from all eternity past (SW VIII: 254) is in this sense the absolute ontological counterfactual: the chaos wherein nothing can subsist because the absolute identity of reason to itself breaks apart in the absence of the bond of divine love (cf. SW VII: 378).

can only be, under the form of A=A. In other words, absolute identity abides only as the copula between *relata,* and while it is not dependent on any given or specific ones, it still is only in such a way that it constitutes a nexus *of relata*. There is thus a certain form, or what Schelling also calls "a manner of being [*Art [d]es Seyns*]," (SW IV: 120) that belongs ineradicably to absolute identity. Such a form is not to be collapsed or confused with the former's innermost being or essence, but simply with the way in which it is given. Within the purview of reason, in fact, this form does not condition the being of absolute identity, but is rather always immediately posited alongside the latter's unconditional being. And thanks to the inseparability of essence and form, whatever may follow from the form is therefore also posited immediately through the being of absolute identity.

Everything is thus according to its essence the one and only being of absolute identity. It is in this sense that Schelling is a monist. But there are multiple ways in which essence can be compliant with its form, and so it is this multiplicity of ways in which the same form can actually be instantiated that ultimately yields the multiplicity of things thought individually. "Absolute identity," we read, "is under the same form in the individual as in the whole, and *vice versa*" (SW IV: 131). This means that, because it stands for the different modes this one being can take, the form is characterized as akin to finitude and as ultimately giving rise to multiplicity. And this is why, in turn, Schelling's monism is a differentiated one—and indeed: an *essentially* differentiated one, since not only is that system comprised of different existing things, but in fact the existence of those things is made possible by the different operative modes of essence: namely as ground and as grounded existence.[20] Of crucial importance in this context, however, is that the formal differentiation which gives rise to multiplicity happens not in accordance to a haphazard profusion, but rather to a structure deeply seated in Schelling's conceptions of indifference (*Indifferenz*), and of the "divine imagination of the fore-image and counter-image in which every essence has its true root" (SW IV: 394). So what is this structure?

If one conceives of the absolute as indifference, as Schelling does, then the aforementioned distinction of form and essence cannot really obtain therein, and so it must be the case that, in the absolute, essence and form are really one. As the *Further Presentations* tell us, however, to be truly one, each must incorporate the other in itself; which is to say that their being one can only be given by the mutual imagining (*einbilden*) of the one into the other. Essence, which has the character of infinity, must in itself be the unity whereby finitude is taken up into infinity; form, on the other

[20] This operative distinction is of course the one which the 1809 *Philosophical Investigations* would make famous: "essence insofar as it exists and essence insofar as it is mere ground of existence" (SW VII: 357). That very important recognition of essence's split into two essences via its "modes of operation [*Wirkungsweisen*]" (SW VII: 409) does not, however, contradict the ultimately monist character of Schelling's ontology. For proof, consider Schelling's vehement profession of an anti-dualistic view: "I do not in any way admit two different worlds but through and through only the *one and the same*, in which everything is comprehended, also what in common consciousness is opposed as nature and spirit." (SW IV: 102) Cf., also the "ultimate principle" of metaphysics in the late *Treatise on the Source of Eternal Truths*: "The *Daß* [is] according to its nature, and therefore in all things, only one; in the great community that we call nature and the world, a single *Daß* which excludes all multiplicity from itself rules" (SW XI: 590).

hand, which has the character of finitude, must in itself be the unity whereby infinity is taken up into finitude. Only thus can "these two unities [be] in the absolute not outside each other, but in each other, and thereby the absolute [be] absolute indifference of form and essence" (SW IV: 416). The structure in question—significantly designated an "organism of the whole" (SW IV: 415)—is thus a threefold one: two instances and their unity. Since, however, these two instances cannot but themselves be a unity in the first place—under pain of not *being* at all, since all being is according to what was argued above only the being of absolute identity—then the structure is of necessity one which calls for its own iteration on different tiers or levels. This is exactly what Schelling means by that "doubled unity" whereby being is actually given as "the identity of identity" (SW IV: 414, 121).[21]

As a consequence of this doubling, the imagination of form and essence in fact yields two ways of having a unity of the infinite with the finite—or what is the same, a unity of unity and multiplicity. Namely: on the one hand, as the unity within multiplicity; and on the other, as multiplicity within unity. Each of these two ways is termed a "potency [*Potenz*]" (SW IV: 414). And in their highest sense, each of those two potencies corresponds to a domain or field of the universe of existence, broadly understood. The first potency, which imagines unity into multiplicity, corresponds to nature. The second potency, or that which imagines multiplicity within unity, corresponds to the ideal world of intelligible determinations, which may admittedly manifest in variable degrees in different existents, but which is nonetheless to be understood, on rational grounds, as present everywhere. In turn, given that each of the aforementioned potencies has to be for itself a unity or a totality—insofar as its very being depends on this—so again in each of them the imaginative structure of two potencies and their identity gets reiterated internally. The one important proviso here is that this time the three inner potencies do so under the overall character of the specific overarching potency to which they belong. In the ideal world, the threefold structure takes on the hue of infinity or generality. In nature, on the other hand, it is instantiated under the guise of finitude or particularity.

The 1806 treatise, "On the Relation between the Real and the Ideal in Nature" very poignantly fleshes out this instantiation of Schelling's identitary ontology in nature-philosophical terms tying in with what the previous section of this paper established. Under the aegis of an elucidation of matter qua "unknown root from whose elicitation all forms and living appearances of nature come forth," (SW II: 359) it tracks the operation within nature of gravity, light, and their coming together to give rise to formed matter. Gravity is characterized as nature's finite or natural principle, i.e., as the grounding principle that brings the infinity of essence into the finitude of

[21] Cf. Schelling's *Stuttgart Seminars* for proof of the long-lasting validity of this: "This transition from identity to difference has often been seen as a suspension of identity; this is however by no means the case, as I will presently show. It is much rather a doubling of essence, hence an intensification [*Steigerung*] of unity" (SW VII: 424–425). The doubling is, on the one hand, exhibited in the transition from the subject-predicate distinction to the subject-object distinction. It is also evident, on the other, in the necessary reiteration of homologous essence-form structures operating *ad intra* and *ad extra* for any given potency or level of Schelling's system. More on this later.

form. Light, in turn, is characterized as the infinite or actualizing principle that describes the multiplicity of form within the unity of essence. And the imaginative coalescence or concretion of both, whereby things can first reach existence, is matter, which is thus explicitly understood not as a principle, but as resulting from principles.

> The eternal opposition and eternal unity of both principles engenders as a third, and as the full ectype of the entire essence, that sensible and visible offspring of nature: matter. Not a matter *in abstracto*, a general or barren one, but rather matter with the liveliness of forms, particularly so that it too again makes out something threefold, disseminated and yet linked into an indissoluble whole (SW II: 371).

Not to be overlooked here is that Schelling's ontological schematic is run through by an inherent dynamical concatenation and an inherent logic of nascency that dictates the order in which the moments of each potency follow one another.[22] For every potency is itself an imaginative composition whose *last* moment is the full identity of essence and form and whose other two constituents are respectively: the identity under the preponderance of form, and on the other hand, the identity under the preponderance of essence. But because being is something which is as such owed to essence, rather than to form, in order for that third or final moment of the overarching structure to obtain—and hence for the structure as a whole to obtain—the moment corresponding to the identity which is seen as posited under the preponderance of form has to be *first* mobilized so as to come to be posited under essence, which alone gives being. Thus, since in constitutive terms the most urgent demand within the structure is the positing of all its moments as *being*, under pain of otherwise having the whole structure fall apart, it is a question of strict ontological necessity that the moment ruled by form comes first, if only to be able to attain its particular subsistence by means of its striving towards essence. This first moment can then be followed by the imaging of form into essence, and finally by the full identification (*Gleichsetzung*) of both form and essence, qua third and final moment of the potency or structure in question.

The natural logic stringing together the potencies of an imaginative schema thus dictates that each preceding moment is relatively more entangled with form—and less with essence—than the subsequent one. This is crucial; for given that form furnishes mere mode of being but not being itself, that means that each moment that precedes another displays the latter's possibility, not yet its actuality. The form, "which only appears as ground," is however only posited *alongside* the unconditional being of essence, which alone is "absolute activity and positive cause of reality" (SW IV: 417). And hence, it is ultimately this necessary commencing by laying the ground of the

[22] An order which will indeed be called into question once the spirit of Schelling's positive philosophy suggests to him that "philosophy has a still larger content than the world" (SW X: 228) and leads him to question how the world indeed may have been released into "the nets of reason or the understanding" (SW X: 143).

higher existence which is to follow which *organizes* every imaginative identity and *dynamizes* the whole. For it is always the third which is the actual, and for the sake of which the first two are given. That is why Schelling says of the first two that they are ideal (*ideell*) determinations of the third, which is what properly speaking has existence, and in which the first two are really (*reell)* one. The relation of ground/existence accordingly links together two inverse orders of priority: on the one hand, a natural one which looks to the order of nascency, giving the first place to what conditions subsequent emergence; on the other, one of ontological preeminence, where existence takes the upper hand over its genetic conditions. Notice, therefore, that the first two are not there accidentally or blindly, but always already geared towards the third. They work as its enabling conditions; but as conditions which themselves would not have been given had the actuality they condition not have had ontological preeminence over them. So that, as Steigerwald correctly notes, the grounding basis or backdrop of what properly shines forth in appearance, is one which is "always already in a dynamic interplay with light and existing appearances."[23]

Speaking again with the terms of the identity proposition A=A, Schelling claims that "all actualization in nature" rests on the gradual annihilation of the finite and bonded, its "becoming-transparent" for the sake of the *copula* or infinite essence that affirms itself in every bonded particular (SW II: 367). And that, because essence is infinite, then it has to affirm itself infinitely, through all possible configurations of form. Or as Schelling says in clear anticipation of the famous 1809 dictum that "will is primal being" (SW VII: 350), "The absolute is however not merely a willing of itself, but a willing in an infinite way, in all forms, degrees and potencies of reality. The imprint of this eternal and infinite willing of itself is the world" (SW II: 362). These convictions remain unchanged for over forty years, and inform Schelling's "latest" thematization of matter in his *Principienlehre*.

III

Still pursuant to the fundamental tenets of the "so-called system of absolute identity" (SW XI: 371), even if by then crucially aware of that system's overall contingency with regard to its facticity, the 1843 *Presentation of the Process of Nature* again insists that only a subject-object can properly be what exists. And it warns just as well that this concept of the subject-object inevitably fragments itself in immediate thought into its constituents. Of these, the pure subject of being must necessarily come first. For as a pure capacity-to-be which has not yet attained actual being, it alone presupposes nothing but itself, and is the initial attractor point of being. This subject must be immediately followed by its onto-logical counterpart, viz. that pure being which is to be attained later: the object. And since each of these two totally lacks that in which the other purely consists—the one as pure capacity with no being, and the other as

[23] Joan Steigerwald, "Schelling's Romanticism. Traces of Novalis in Schelling's Philosophy," *Freedom, Nature, and Systematicity: Essays on F.W.J. Schelling*, ed. G. Anthony Bruno (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 47.

pure being with no capacity—then neither could subsist in isolation. As a third moment, therefore, which however must always remain third insofar as it genetically presupposes the previous two, the subject-object is posited, which alone has the capacities to be and not be, both of which are required by what *exists*. There is accordingly a necessary concatenation of subject, object, and subject-object. These three moments or principles, therefore, belong essentially to the idea or prototype of the existent (*das Seyend*). And this idea of the existent, because it forms a constitutively self-enclosed co-belonging of all its moments under the form and rule of the whole they integrate, and because it follows the necessity of thought in so constituting itself as a circular co-determination of parts and whole, amounts to an "*organism of pure reason*" (SW X: 306).[24] Without disregarding possible differences, it will become clear that, like the "organism of the whole" of 1801-1802, this new threefold schema likewise constitutes a generative existential prototype governed by the law of identity in its implication of the law of the ground.

The notion of an organism at the basis of all reality amounts to thinking all species of existents as variable configurations of a prototype of existence. Only, while the absolute idea comprehends *the existent* in general, it does so not abstractly but rather precisely in its *con-cretion*, i.e., in the growing together and mutual determination of all particulars therein contained. The difference between an abstract and an absolute idea like Schelling's—henceforth: the Idea[25]—is thus that only the latter is susceptible of being exhibited as a generative process whereby its comprehension of all kinds and species is given by the capacity it has of producing them in their full difference and multiplicity, rather than by its absorption of them through the effacement of their differences. Importantly, that production must be fuelled by the infinite dynamical potential welling up in the necessity of reason itself, and so takes place as the ordered self-affirmation of the essence which streams forth from the identity of reason through all possible configurations under which its intension can be deployed in the extensional mode of its form. In other words, the actualization of the Idea, qua prototype of existence, can only be achieved through the ordered

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[24] Or as Bruce Matthews aptly characterizes it: a "relational structure [which] is incapable of being reduced to the linear mechanics of logic, since it exhibits the same property of reciprocity indicative of the dynamic feedback that structures life's capacity for self-organization." Bruce Matthews, *Schelling's Organic Form of Philosophy: Life as the Schema of Freedom* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2011), xiii.

[25] Although perhaps visually obtrusive and stylistically questionable, I believe that it is worth rendering Schelling's term '*Idee*' as 'Idea,' with a capital 'I'. The choice aims to mark the fact that this idea does not simply stand for that of a given existent or other—not an *eidos* in the sense of an *essentia rerum*, or the form of a species—but rather for the epitome and source of all such ideas, a master prototype or prototypes, as it were. In this sense, Schelling emphasizes that "the existent as the universal per se is not an idea, but the Idea per se, *the Idea itself*" (SW XI: 273). That said, it is crucial not to mistake this capitalized designation of the Idea for its would-be hypostatization or individualization. It is precisely the realization that there is an unfathomable—if not therefore unbridgeable—chasm between the Idea and a would-be *Ideal* of pure reason which motivates Schelling's turn to positive philosophy. For more on this difference, see the *Presentation of Purely Rational Philosophy* and the *Treatise on the Source of Eternal Truths* (SW XI: 283 ff. & XI: 575 ff.).

generation and genetic interconnection of all the possible iterations of itself qua finite and determinate. Or as Schelling says:

> If absolute indifference is thus only the direct expression of reason itself, then the leading principle of a science of reason cannot be anything other than precisely to trace and hold firm to this indifference in everything and through everything, i.e., to regard it as that which should be actualized by means of the science, to be presented as actual. Solely from this indifference, which entails that all potencies included in it likewise be satisfied, we have tried to also comprehend the universe (SW X: 343).

Any one existing thing—or indeed domain of things—must accordingly be thought as drawing its determinate existence in virtue of being an ectype of the original prototype of the existent: i.e., by being other than the *whole* Idea, even if nonetheless a part or moment of the Idea's total possible yield, and only on condition of minimally complying with its overall structure: to be, at least in a liminal sense, a subject-object.

The Idea is thus generative precisely insofar as its identity is not a logical but a natural—or, even better—a *naturing* one. The philosophical history of such a generative universal containment stretches as far back as the Pythagorean musings of the older Plato, readily available in his notion of a cosmic animal (*κόσμον ζῷον / kósmon zôon*) as the organization which comprehends all other organizations, as well as in his account of what he calls the divine method or way (*ὁδός / hodós*) which one must follow in order to trace the concretions which the ontogenetic dialectic between unity and unlimitedness is capable of yielding.[26] And like Plato, all those centuries before at the dawn of the tradition of ontological dynamics, Schelling is also *mutatis mutandis* concerned with thinking how it is that the concrete ectypes of an ideal prototype can subsist beyond the latter in a real community with others like them. At stake here is thus a stepping outside of what most generally and prototypically can be said to *be*, towards that *locus* where multiple, specified things can exist as actual. Were we to speak for a moment in a Platonic tone, we could say that here the centrality of the *ὄντωσ ὄν* (*óntōs ón*) is left behind for the periphery of the *χώρα* (*chôra*).[27] Or equivalently, that

[26] Cf. Plato's *Timaeus* 30c and *Philebus* 16c–e, respectively. Though this notion of a prototype of existence likewise connects to claims by other thinkers whose influence on Schelling is undeniable—e.g. Leibniz's analogy of a garden whose every plant is a new garden, Herder's postulation of a main organizational plasma at the base of all existing things, Kielmeyer's doctrine of the ratio of forces, and even Kant's principle of thoroughgoing determination (minus the organic character of this determination)—it is easy to see that Schelling ultimately draws the insight from Plato. In his 1794 notes on the *Timaeus* and *Philebus*, Schelling registers the following: "The world is, however, the ectype of a pure, ideal prototype, thus ectype of an idea of animal, which lies at the basis of every particular species and kind, which embraces all species and kinds of animals, just like the visible world likewise contains all kinds of animals." Schelling, "*Timaeus*," 29.

[27] A more careful engagement with this resonance between Schelling and Plato, which would among other things have to thematize the different degrees to which they make distinctions between matter proper and space, must be foregone here. I merely recall that Plato famously chose the term *χώρα* (*chôra*),

emphasis is put on the fact that the actual existence of which we ourselves are a part can only be purchased once the plenitude, infinity, and permanence of the eidetic is recognized as only the paradigm, however necessary, of a reality which in order to be multiple and concrete cannot but be fully localized, thoroughly changing, and irreducibly submitted to parameters of finitude. This would therefore be the place to engage in a consideration of the role which space and time play as "form[s] of finitude," (SW II: 364) and of how it is exclusively thanks to their ordered accommodation of a finite thing's constitutive essence as it exercises—and exhausts—itself in its interaction with alterity that each naturing particular is not only placed in its exclusive position in the midst of totality, but also thereby determined in its being. Such a consideration should likewise take note of the role played by the dynamical articulation of dimensions in the construction of complexity and orientation, as well as of how the asymmetric conjugation of space and time correlates to and is governed by the imaginative bond of gravity and light. Only, because it would lead our overall investigation too far afield, that consideration must be marked for a later opportunity, and attention must now turn to the way in which the moments of the Idea emerge from their organic totality, only to come together again under the guise of matter.

In the original, pre-actual unity of the Idea, the three moments are not for the sake of their own being, but rather just for the sake of the organic prototype they integrate. Each moment itself is thus something which has not gone over into actuality; and only in virtue of this respective abnegation of their own self-transition into actual being can the organism of reason be the consummate Idea of that which exists. If, however, there is on the one hand to be any-*thing* other than the prototype of existence in general as it is constituted by the necessity of reason, and if, further, the unity those merely logical moments compose is itself to ever be actual, then the moments of this Idea must attain to being for themselves. In other words, and just as had been advanced back in Schelling's 1800 *General Deduction of the Dynamical Process*, absolute indifference may be the source of all actuality, but only to the extent that it loses itself and ceases to be what it was, in order to reveal itself as what it has dynamically become. Perfect, self-contained unity sacrifices itself as such and gives way to a multiplicity whose gradual dynamical unfoldment will make possible the actuality of existential forms which were only indeterminately contained in the original unity at rest. Needless to say, if and why such a leaving behind of the absolute ontological "abyss of rest and inactivity" (SW IV: 34) takes place is not susceptible to *a priori* thematization, and can only be *a posteriori* corroborated. But having once presupposed it does happen, the presentation of how it happens becomes the task of a science of pure reason.

Calling the subject of existence, insofar as it is first-come, the ground or basis for the unity of the whole reason-organism, Schelling maintains that since the original unity is anchored in that subject, it can only be suspended by it. To that end, it is

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which designated the surrounding fields that environed the *polis*, for the medium that allows for extra-eidetic existence insofar as it "provides a fixed state for all things that come to be." (*Timaeus* 52b).

however necessary that the possibility of being that the subject consists in be put at the service not of the Idea but of itself. In so putting its potency in service of itself, the subject of the Idea essentially suspends the self-retention it exercised so as to remain mere capacity-to-be for a whole larger than itself. In place of such retention, it rather releases itself as something which arrogates being for its own self, in direct contravention of the role it should have otherwise played in regard to the Idea. It is this breaking with and out of the Idea that amounts to the upsurge of nature, i.e., the moment of nascency: the passing over into being—but a being *external* to the Idea insofar as not primordially geared towards the Idea. In what is thus a clear example of how even in a science of reason the Idea is impotent if not for nature, and also of that other conviction that there can be no life without contradiction (SW VIII: 319), Schelling reasserts the ambivalence or tension—a "*dissonance*" he elsewhere calls it (SW X: 101)—that must be present already in the very first moment of the actualization of being if there is to be anything more than just the absolute and absolutely self-contained Idea.

And here is the point of one of Schelling's most decisive insights: that the Idea of the existent cannot transpose itself or any of its constitutive moments to a *locus* other than its own—that of pure logical necessity—and so cannot actualize itself, except by effectuating an inversion of its own constitutive disposition, such that what was once mere *potentia* in the Idea, because its chronological priority still obtains outside the Idea but is no longer immediately controlled by any kind of higher organization, therefore becomes a sort of incontinent *actus* once it emerges from the eidetic, a sort of unfettered overflow of being which loses control of itself and gives itself completely out, with no reserve or self-limitation. At the same time, what was proper *actus* in the eidetic is thereby forced to regain itself in extra-eidetic actuality first as a *potentia* that must be gradually granted by that newly incontinent and alterity-excluding *actus*. It is, in short, as if in its inevitable urge to nature into actuality, the Idea were quite literally turned inside out. With incisive wordplay, Schelling designates this nascent whole which is transposed outside the purely eidetic realm "the inverted One—*Unum versum*, thus *Universum*" (SW X: 311).

Only, in the context of this world-founding uni-version, the principle which natures out of the indifference designated by the Idea's organic composition ceases to be what it itself was according to the logic of that composition. What was once true subject or anchoring basis of the prototype of the existent becomes, once outside of the pre-actual milieu of that prototype, only a spurious subject, a subject which is no longer in truth such. Following Schelling's assertion that "potency is synonymous with subject" (SW X: 381), then in terms of ontological capacity, the first principle's exclusionary takeover of being corresponds to an inversely proportional function whereby it ceases to be mere capacity *within* the Idea and rather saturates the space *outside* the Idea with a being that knows virtually no capacity, i.e., no subjectivity or self-retention, no interiority, but mere unfettered and hence one-sided exteriority. Having lost its essential place in the innermost center of the pure Idea, the being that first stands out into actuality—the *πρῶτον ἐξιστάμενον* (*prōton existámenon*) or *primum Existens*—is thus one which can only do so at the price of becoming estranged from

its own original potency.[28] Were it to last, this estrangement of being would in fact constitute a fruitless and barren existence, a one-sided and undifferentiated externality which would amount to nothing less than a miscarriage of the Idea, because none of the latter's higher potencies would come of it. But the estrangement is only a moment in the process of nature, and is ultimately prevented from enduring by the dynamism of identity inherent in the law of pure reason. Still, the only possibility that is left for this estranged being's conversion back into true subjectivity, true interiority, dictates that the principle whose takeover of being inverted the Idea should now gradually pass through the process of recognizing itself as the relative object of those higher potencies which were subsequent to it in the prototype and which in passing over to actuality it has tried to exclude. And these excluded principles in turn are thenceforth compelled to ceaselessly vie for a return to their originally allotted roles by the only means left to them: sublimating their opposition to the exclusionary usurper of actual being by gradually obtaining from it a mediated access to the extra-eidetic *locus* which it has unilaterally taken over.

Thus is the Idea transposed to a universe outside and incepted into actuality: on the one hand at the price of having lost—at least initially—the possibility of being anything other than mere externality, mere blind being. But on the other, with a clear inherent directionality of production, for the very circumstance of its innate inversion means that it is also incepted with the simultaneous demand that it strive to regain its original disposition and harmonious unity as the organic betrothal of the three principles that make up the original subjective-objective Idea of the existent. And so just as the *inversion* of the One belongs to the process of nature, so too and as ineliminably does the urge to undergo its *reversion* by means of a gradual *καταβολή* (*katabolḗ*), that is: by a debasement or a laying down of the principle which stepped out first in order that it serve as the foundation of the higher ones in the production of the various ectypes of the prototype that await yet to be actualized. This laying down of a ground on the basis of which higher existences may be actualized is of course none other than the moment of materialization. Indeed, as first accomplished

[28] One key point to be registered is that, despite appearances, Schelling's designation of '*primum Existens*' concerns not simply the principle itself, but rather, and albeit proleptically, the first concretion of all principles at the moment of their *natural* inception qua minimally subjective and maximally objective (cf. SW X: 130). This means that, even if that designation explicitly receives a new sense of loss and estrangement to go along with that of chronological priority, it nonetheless remains perfectly consistent in 1843 with the 1801 designation of matter itself—and not only one of its constitutive principles—as '*primum Existens*' (cf. SW IV: 144). Pursuing the substantiation of this nonetheless fundamental and often misread point is beyond this paper's scope. It will suffice to recall that in the *Presentation of Purely Rational Philosophy*, Schelling affirms that: "immediately as [the first principle] has raised itself into being (is =B), it falls under the power of the other [principle]" (SW XI: 395). In other words, at play here, as elsewhere, is a conceptual-ontological distinction which must be dynamically drawn, but which cannot effectively hold in time as distinct, or which has no chronological dilation of its own. That it must nonetheless be held apart in thought (just as all principles are indeed held apart only in thought, but in reality we only see the result of their interaction), obeys the eminently *speculative* conviction that "true science is not allowed to leap over any moment" (SW X: 325). Incidentally, this point is directly connected to the issues which are likewise merely hinted at in footnote 42, regarding the distinction between the *ἄπειρον* (*ápeiron*) and the *χώρα* (*chôra*).

subjective-objective ectype, matter ensues as soon as the outpoured first principle accepts the action of the higher principle it previously excluded and "become[s] in regard to it much rather object (objectual for it), subordinate[s] itself to it," (SW X: 310) thereby "mak[ing] itself into the higher potency's *ground*, to the matter in which the former actualizes itself" (SW X: 324). Thanks to this subordination, the two higher principles, each in the operational manner which corresponds to it, jointly bring about that the first existent, which at the moment of its inception is maximally objective and minimally subjective, may gradually come to restore its true subjectivity. Hence carried over into extra-eidetic actuality, the principles come together again as operative causes "out of whose interaction," as Schelling will say in the *Presentation of the Purely Rational Philosophy*, "concreta arise, and, according to the different possible positions of the principles to one another, *different* concreta" (SW XI: 411).

The entire process of nature, in other words, will be dictated by the gradual, systemically interconnected, and variable *katabolization* of that initially uniform and one-sided externality at different points of space and time. Ascending through the variable configurations afforded by the changing ratio between the Idea's constitutive principles turned causes, the account therefore offers an ontological version of Herder's and Kielmeyer's organic models of generation by force combinatorics.[29] A gradation or spectrum of possible existents is thereby laid out which corresponds to the forms of nature and which is ordered in accordance to the degree to which a particular existent showcases the subsumption of the merely external kind of being to the interior and self-controlled one that is granted to it only by the operation of the higher potencies on the materialized basis that the first outpoured principle provides. Between the point of most resistance to the *materializing reversion* and that of the total overturning of the spurious subject back into its true subjectivity lie an infinitude of moments. Each of them corresponds to an actual natural kind and, because it is still dynamically under the "pressure, which every following (coming) one exercises on the preceding one," (SW XI: 399) it does not yet arrest the ongoing process of nature, but simply lays the basis for its continuation. This goes from the emergence of corporeality, which first upholds a quantitatively determinate impenetrability stretched out along three spatial dimensions, to the ever growing complexity and qualitative differentiation which is rather determined through the temporal relativization and withdrawal of that impenetrability; from so-called inorganic nature, with its promising crystallizations, to the emergence of living, self-moving beings, and finally to that no less wondrous emergence of consummated consciousness.

If Schelling says that the metaphysical concept of matter is the most difficult of all, it is accordingly because of the inherent contradiction that stirs within it, whereby one must think of something that is actual, yet also immediately the potency of something higher which must become of it. It is this contradiction which is at the

[29] The key texts in this regard are Herder's *Ideas Towards a Philosophy of the History of Humanity*, and *God: Some Dialogues*, as well as Kielmeyer's *On the Relations Between Organic Forces in the Series of Different Organisations, and on the Laws and Consequences of these Relations*. Schelling is an admirer of Kielmeyer, to be sure; but the ultimate Herderian source of Kielmeyer's central ideas is not lost on him. Cf. SW III: 195.

root and corresponds to the law of the ground;[30] this tension that explains why one never experiences matter *as such* but only ever formed matter, and why the process of nature pushes onward in the direction of the full enactment of the myriad forms which are potentially contained in the *primum Existens*, again and again relinquishing its accomplished products to the function of grounding ever higher ones. That, from the perspective of a genetic reconstruction of our own transcendental givenness this must be so, is dictated by the very logic of identity which Schelling had expounded four decades before and—despite important complementing insights—never since abandoned. It is indeed in compliance with the structure of an identity understood under the guise of the potentiating imagination of the real and the ideal that life and consciousness are not belatedly appended to existence but rather have their eventual emergence prepared for from the former's very inception.[31] The emergence of life, indeed, constitutes nothing other than the moment when the shifting preponderance of reality and ideality reaches an inflection point and materiality begins to be overpowered by the form which a given matter instantiates. Because of that dawning preponderance of the ideal over the real, the organism proper appears as that product whose subsisting unity is given not by the matter it comprises, but by the form which cycles through and disposes of that matter, subsisting even as the concrete matter which supports it at one given moment passes away from it only to be replaced by other matter. And this is exactly why in the *Presentation of My System of Philosophy*, just as he had called matter the *primum Existens*, Schelling in turn called the organism the *secundum Existens*. The organism itself, however, will in turn be nothing other than the matter disposed of by that highest and most ideal point which nature reaches: the I, or self-consciousness. And though he never explicitly gets around to it, one can only assume that Schelling likewise intended to designate the I the *tertium Existens*. For what is the I if not a synthesis of material existence and life disposed of by consciousness, the final natural form wherein essence "completely returns to its own infinity," (SW IV: 47) and "all potencies of the universe, all these separate moments are determined to be gathered as in the last unity" such that "a new beginning … the world of spirit, or the ideal side of the universe" (SW X: 389–390) may be opened alongside that of nature?

Of crucial importance is also noting the manner in which the *katabolē* or materializing reversion occurs. In this regard, Schelling once again appeals to Plato.

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[30] Thus in the *Presentation of Purely Rational Philosophy*, Schelling will state that the general property of matter is "to be ground of existence without itself existing; or to be that which has its existence merely insofar as it serves another for its existence" (SW XI: 398).

[31] Cf. Schelling's early pronouncement in the dialogue *Bruno, or On the Natural and Divine Principle of Things* that "the attempt to mechanically try to call back to life [a] nature rendered dead in its innermost aspect" is a task stemming from insanity and betraying an incomparable "crudity in the understanding of nature and its beings" (SW VI: 315). Here one again sees the crucial role that a correct conception of matter plays in the possibility of articulating a philosophy which succumbs to neither dualism nor one-sided eliminativism, and which, far from being "a feeble philosophy, a mere artefact … can measure itself up to life, which far from feeling itself powerless in the face of life and its tremendous reality, or of being limited to the sad business of negation and destruction, rather takes its own force from actuality itself" (SW XIII: 11).

Drawing inspiration from the latter's notion of cosmogonic intellectual persuasion (*πείθειν / peíthein*),[32] he argues that all actuality which becomes on the basis of matter, be that immediately or mediately, "cannot be actualized save insofar as it brings this principle which first came forth to being—or *persuades* it, following the beautiful Platonic expression—to go back again into pure capacity-for-being, into potency" (SW X: 347). This interiorization of blind being back to the point where, in lesser or greater degree, it controls and contains itself from simply exhausting itself in its own ontological outpouring, is nothing other than an attempt at a reversion of that unfettered passing over into being whereby the first principle forewent its role as mooring point for subsequent potencies and tried to be exclusively for itself. In Schelling's words: "Form itself consists only in the *negation* of merely blind being, i.e. in its *interiorization*. A thing is posited thereby, when a potency arises in matter by which it becomes more or less in power of itself" (SW X: 397). Rather than an imposition, therefore—whether transcendent or transcendental—form constitutes the liberation *in* matter of those things it is inherently and constitutively empowered to become as a result of the action of its higher principle upon it lower one. Form is thus not to be explained by an aggregation of any kind, but by an action whose result is to refurbish that first principle or basis with a measure of its lost potency. Hence instead of a merely one-sidedly external and barren being, what persuasion seeks is to transfigure blindly outpoured being into one which has a reserve of its own power and keeps it inside under increasingly complex forms of *actual* subjectivity.[33]

It is also in this decisive juncture, of course, that the *Principienlehre* connects with Schelling's earlier nature-philosophy, as in dynamical terms this persuasion expresses none other than the potentiating operation of light on the basis provided by gravity. That imaginative operation had been characterized as destructively re-constructive precisely insofar as light seeks to partially undo the determinations gained in the basic terms of pure preponderance in order to erect more complex, more informative, qualitative determinations on their basis. To that end, while under the organization of gravity an essence quantitatively fills a three-dimensional region of the medium of extra-eidetic being, under that of light it in turn partially renounces that

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[32] The notion of persuasion is of course most famous from *Timaeus* 48a, but as a *leitmotif* courses through many other Platonic works. In its ontological register, it also very importantly rears its head in the *Statesman* (272c ff; 304d ff.), specifically as connected to the notion of a weaving together of constitutive powers for the sake of an overall coalescence which is oriented towards the good. And one should in any case not forget that the form of the good—to which are credited both a thing's being known as well as its being—is tellingly symbolized in Book VI of the *Republic* by the sun, and its operation by that truth-disclosing one of light (507a–509c).

[33] "Passive limitation," Schelling claimed in the *Stuttgart Seminars,* "is indeed imperfection; a relative lack of force. But to limit oneself, to confine oneself into one point and yet hold fast to it with all forces, not to let go, until it has expanded into a world, this is the greatest force and perfection … In the force to confine oneself lies genuine originality, the radical force [*Wurzelkraft*]" (SW VII: 428–429). Faithful to this intuition, when talking about the substantial form of anything existent, i.e., to that which makes anything the thing it actually is as raised above mere matter, Schelling holds—explicitly against Aristotle but no less applicable to Kant—that he "could say all the less of it, as he thought of it as something positive" (SW X: 381).

claim so as to invest itself rather in a return to qualitative interiority. Only this interiority is now conditioned by the prior occurrence of the gravitational process, and so occurs on its basis: focused, as it were, in the three-dimensional locality which the process has already determined, geared towards giving that gravitationally grounded existent an ideal, representative life to go along with its real presence. So that, instead of being internality pure and simple, it is rather an internality *of* externality. It is an internality which is environed, conditioned, and indeed made actual by the externality through the opposition of which it has been incepted and in which it takes its place.

And therein, at last, lies the crux of the matter. Provided such interiorizing persuasion does indeed take place; what is gained thereby? Is the transposition of the world from the innermost Idea to the peripheral medium where actuality obtains undone? By no means. Nothing that gets out of the original Idea, so to speak, can make it back to *that* Idea. Nature does not retrace its steps; it does not let itself be eliminated, neutered, or arrested; it simply natures on. Every natured issuance stands, despite its best efforts at emulation of the Idea, at a remove from that Idea. As its ectype, it does indeed restore the latter's structure, but only relatively, and thus without constituting an effacement of the original transgression of absolute identity. Still, the operation of the higher potencies on the exclusionary outpoured subject yields as a result an eidetically homologous inner side of this great outside that is the actual universe. While the absolute inwardness that is lost as soon as the pure capacity-to-be passes over into actual being is never again regained, the persuasion of which the estranged subject is made object in becoming the material of the higher and initially excluded potencies results in a directive interiority constitutively distributed *within* the actual peripheral universe rather than merely in the inherently innermost and central Idea. Far from a simply tragic loss of origin, the impossibility of a genuine return thereby reveals itself as a felicitous circumstance on this side of finitude. For it is exactly this indelibility of the transposition inherent to the ontological nascency operative even within the milieu of *a priori* thought that explains the rational possibility of a subjective-objective universe that is irreducible to the waywardness of mere mechanism and blind efficient causality—and is so *by nature*, that is: not merely regulatively or by transcendental imposition.

It is, in other words, because no reabsorption by the Idea is possible, that the ideal as such acquires its actual operativity in the midst of our reality. Succinctly put, that ideal operativity or incidence of the eidetic within actualized reality plays itself out in a threefold manner. Insofar as it invites essence not to give itself out in spite of all form, thus to rather give itself out in a pondered manner, or in accordance not merely with what *can* but also *should* be, it is first and foremost equivalent to matter's autonomous determination according to a given specific idea, i.e. to an *εἶδος* (*eidos*) or form. Thanks to an existent's obedience of that specific determination, moreover, it will also be susceptible of being ideally ascertained, that is: in-formatively taken into the subjectivity of the rest of real existents as something specific and meaningful. And this in turn means that, in accordance with the internal complexity with which their specific idea endows them, different matters will, to different degrees, become

themselves the subjects who represent other matters. Schelling thereby insists that form and existential order are no mere subjective epistemic or regulative projections, but a consequence of the very principles which make up the rationally necessary constitution of the prototype of existence, and so indissociable from the conditions whereby an essence may first possibly express itself unto objectivity in the first place.

And this ultimately cashes itself out in systemic terms. For given that the emergence of life proper and conscious intellection depend on structures of self-sustainment—or, again with Matthews, of non-linear dynamic feedback[34]—it is only by thus grounding the objective obtaining of final causality that it becomes possible to give a developmentally unitary explanation of existence, bridging the otherwise unconnected existential poles of the preponderantly physical and material with that of the preponderantly ideal and immaterial. The material co-implication of the laws of identity and the ground thus governs Schelling's engagement not only with natural phenomena, but also his account of the relation of the whole of nature to that which is beyond the merely natural, and thereby also of consciousness to its genesis, and of mind to its conditions of embodiment. Schelling does not thereby abandon the field of transcendental idealism, but he finds a way to articulate it with that upon which it depends and which it otherwise could not but eliminate from its theoretical gaze, inevitably at the cost of the validity of its insights. In this sense, he is thereby at long last delivering on promises made long before: that of explaining with one and the same principles, first the construction of matter, then the entirety of the operative breadth of nature, and finally that of the all and our place in its midst as beings who comprehend it.

Conclusions

What fruits can be said to have come out of Schelling's lifelong pursuit to dispel the darkness that attaches to matter and which had proven—and still proves—to be the pitfall of so many philosophical and physical inquisitions? In light of what has been seen thus far, some tentative considerations may be submitted. From a perspective broader than the one taken in this paper, one would need to say that, qua first existent, matter is first and foremost the immediate trace of the eternal, and eternally ongoing, contingent event whose result is existence.[35] But from the purely rational *a priori* perspective which has been favored in this paper, and to which these conclusions will adhere, one could just as generally say that matter is above all[36] the medium in and

[34] Cf. footnote 24.

[35] Indeed, against taking nature-philosophy and its elucidation of matter as something done once and for all, rather than as the abiding *Grundlage* of philosophy, it bears recalling that it is precisely the ambition to thematize a positive, *per posterius* determinable event that leads to Schelling's "organism of times" (SW VIII: 310) and makes the moment of materialization an eternally ongoing one. Cf. SW XII: 212: "This materializing of the God was not something that occurred once and for all, but an always ongoing event."

[36] A science of reason mostly interrogates matter insofar as it is a living expression of absolute identity, but there are other ways to interrogate matter, which should by no means be unfamiliar to any of us. "We call matter, thought in abstraction of soul or the moving principle, mass … If matter were

through which the inception into existence occurs of all the possible manners in which the universal essence can be compliant with the form under which alone it can attain to actuality. That is to say: in view of considerations of formal compliance—where 'form' is understood according to its Schellingian stipulation qua *modus essendi*—matter provides the stage for the actual and ordered deployment of the fruitfulness or the existential yield of an otherwise merely intensionally given ontological capital. It thus acts as existential matrix, in all the senses in which the richness of this term suggest: as a receiving/releasing medium (a *Gebärmutter*), as an array of possibilities, and as the structured embedding of particularity in commonality. And because it is requisite for that deployment that, once commenced, all of the formal possibilities be strung together in their enactment, and because, on account of their being finite, those possibilities must be in a relation of—immediate or mediate—inter-determination, then matter simultaneously provides the backdrop for the operation of those laws—mechanic, yes, but also purposive—that tie the variegated manifestations together as the systematic, spatio-temporalized yield of the one original essence. In short, matter designates the upsurge of a region of actuality, or a field of existence, where all the formal possibilities of the universal essence occur as inter-determining particulars of a system of reason.[37] In that sense Buchheim keenly characterizes matter in terms of the function of "world-entrance [*Welteintritt*]," i.e. "that which releases something into a world".[38]

Only, the preponderantly physico-material field does not saturate the universe of existence. Matter "is the *primum Existens*, not in the sense … that it be the highest existent, but that it is the first to step out of the Idea" (SW X: 308) Buchheim puts it thus: "If matter only conditions worldliness for what is actual, then obviously not the whole actual thing is material, but rather what is material of it is always to be distinguished against that which, in simple contrast thereto, Schelling calls immaterial."[39] Indeed, the fundamental assumption of a system of reason is to think of reason as identical to itself, and hence to think of all essence as proceeding from absolute identity. On account of the inherent structure that follows from the nexal meaning of identity, however, the formal constitution of the essence in question ideally splits it alongside an axis of whose two regions one inherently has being, while the other comports itself as the mere condition for this being. Consequently, as first expression of that one and unique essence, not only can matter only be given by internally showcasing or being an instantiation of that same regional split, but it must

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accordingly nothing more or nothing else as what it is due to mass or what is passive in it (but it is never merely this), then nothing could be derived from it other than mechanism" (SW VI: 242).

[37] In his *Introduction to the Philosophy of Revelation, or Grounding of Positive Philosophy* (SW XIII: 88), Schelling makes clear that the purely rational philosophy developed out of the essential yield of absolute identity does not need to be systematized, but rather, given its fundamental assumptions, is born a system. This should also provide the departure point for a correction of many recent misreadings of Schelling's rational philosophy, which seem to conflate the system's overall ungroundedness with a lack of unity or systematicity.

[38] Thomas Buchheim. *Eins von Allem. Die Selbstbescheidung des Idealismus in Schellings Spätphilosophie*, (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1992), 48.

[39] Buchheim, *Eins von Allem*, 48.

at the same time gradually elevate itself to the point whereby it fully subjects itself to serving externally—or in its own totality—as the ground of another coextensive field through which the original or producing essence can first *fully* be made actual. More succinctly: the fact that the ground/existence distinction is not only internally operative in matter, but also in respect to the material as a whole, means precisely that matter carries within itself, and necessarily, the conditions for that which is opposed to matter and superior to matter, even if genetically related to matter and subject to a non-reductive accommodation alongside matter in the overall universe of existence. While matter thus emerges as the *first* domain of the actualized prototype of existence, since the dynamical logic holding together the very constitution of the prototype follows a non-symmetrical concatenation, the *highest* actualization of that prototype cannot be instantiated by matter but by the optimal configuration of a developmental unity integrated by matter and what comes after matter and subjugates it.

It is important to emphasize, therefore, that just as the material cannot be that which fully actualizes the prototype of which its existence is an ectype, neither can it be that which overtakes matter by itself, but only the hierarchized conjunction of both. Identity's implication of the law of the ground dictates as much that the lower should not exhaust the all, as it does that the higher cannot be given without the lower, and must not only naturally arise out of, but also always be borne by the lower. It is thus as true that matter cannot be fully resolved into the spiritual—an important manifestation of "the irresolvable remainder" (SW VII: 360)—as it is that matter must give rise to spirituality, for the sake of which matter is first deployed in the system of reason. What ultimately gives the direction or method to the multiplicity of material occurrences in the incepted medium of actuality, and what therefore also determines their limit—not in any numerical sense, but rather qua limit of their tendency—is always a progression that brings the "issuances" of the issuing essence from the point where they least perfectly instantiate it (though of course they must always minimally instantiate it, otherwise they would not *be*) to the one point where a final one of those configurations perfectly instantiates or recreates it, thus in a sense coming full circle and capping a certain mode of the production afforded by the original essence. Material progression, as was therefore said, begins at the point of minimal compliance for existence, goes through the inflection or internal midpoint at which matter loses its substantiality to the organizing form, and ends at the limit point *in which* the material altogether ceases to be present, and has nothing if not a negative or extrinsic subsistence.[40] That said, neither is this coming full circle and arriving at the end of the progression of the formal issuances of essence a cessation of the latter's productivity nor is the return back to itself a seamless one, such that the entire progression would then be effaced without trace as though it had never happened. I will not dwell on the reasons why it is not a cessation. Suffice it to say, just as the original prototype is generative, its actualized highest ectype is, as such, also generative within its own milieu: that of history, of which according to Schelling it is as true that it has a *terminus*

[40] Cf. SW X: 369 ff. and X: 388 ff. for Schelling's discussion of these two points which, as was said previously, correspond to the emergence of life and consciousness.

ad quem or end, as it is that this *terminus* is not genetically teleological, like nature's, but escathological.[41] More immediately relevant for this paper, however, is that the coming full circle is not a seamless but a displaced return of essence to itself. And this necessary displacement operative even in the best accomplished return, is what ultimately marks the meaning of nature's naturing and of how this naturing irreversibly envelops any possible actualization of the Idea in the milieu of its own irreducible past.

It was argued, indeed, that the gradual actualization in matter of all the potencies that are therewith injected into existence is tantamount to an ever increasing refurbishment of matter with a measure of self-control. Thanks to that self-control, instead of unfettered outpouring, matter may reserve its capacity under the guise of a dimension of interiority, or an in-formative other side to that aspect of its being which extensionally occupies space. Indeed, as innermost center of being, the Idea is pure intension. Schelling is nonetheless as aware that the philosophical construction of particularity demands the transposition of essence into a shared natural milieu beyond its self-containment, as he is that unless the power unleashed by this transposition be ruled by a higher cause, being runs the great peril of losing itself without producing any lasting generations. But it is the fundamental—and fundamentally Platonic—marker of his conception of matter that the existential localization of essence at stake in its materialization is ultimately and constitutively governed by the submission and collaboration of lower causes to and with higher ones. [42] This evinces itself in the

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[41] Cf. for example SW XIV: 118. For the difference between the (reconstructively) teleological and the eschatological, as well as why that would be significant to thinking how the human being is the "frontier of nature" (SW X: 390), see Sean J. McGrath, "Populism and the Late Schelling on Mythology, Ideology, and Revelation", *Analecta Hermeneutica* 9 (2017).

[42] It is crucial to distinguish between the notion of matter qua existent, and that of the material in its merely ideal sense of the factor of existence which is by itself unlimited but may lend itself as the "substrate of limitation" (SW XI: 287). The term 'matter' is often used in scholarly literature, though in fact equivocally, to refer to the principle of the unlimited in its speculatively postulated independence of all higher check or in its rebellion to such a check. This principle is indeed a constituent of the Idea, but it can only be called matter in an analogical sense, as the "ideal presupposition of all these ideas" (SW XI: 367). This whole issue touches on complex questions, of Platonic heritage, which can only here be marked for a later investigation: what is the precise relation between the ἄπειρον (*ápeiron*)—a principle—and the χώρα = ὑποδοχή = μήτηρ (*chóra* = *hypodochḗ* = *mētēr*, i.e., the receptacle and mother)—which in contrast to the former is *not* a principle but a *concretum*, and is as such related to the *Philebus*' *το μικτον* (*to mikton*, i.e., the mixture), which stands in need of the cause of *νοῦς* (*nous*) in order that "certain generations result…"? How do these in turn relate to χάος (*cháos*), or the still chaotic πᾶν ὅσον ἦν ὁρατὸν (*pãn hóson ẽn horatòn*, i.e., the disorderly jumble of all that was visible, see *Timaeus* 30a)—which is *neither* a principle, *nor* a kind per se, but more like a radical ontological counterfactual: the speculative conjecture of what would have been the case had no axiarchic persuasion of the lower by the higher taken place? How does this latter relate to identity and rational systematicity? It seems the conflation of these philosophemes, both in their Platonic reception, as well as in the reception of Schelling's reinscription of them, has been widespread. Admittedly, Schelling's assertion in the 1809 *Philosophical Investigations* concerning what he calls "Plato's matter" (SW VII: 361) is at least partly to blame for the common conflation, even if Schelling does admit the equivocal nature of that designation later on (cf. SW XI: 386 ff. & XII: 596–597). Once properly clarified and put in Schellingian terms, the issue marks the difference between matter within the system of reason—such as it is developed out of the essence of identity—and that radically

notion that the first, wayward, transposition of essence into existence nonetheless immediately becomes the departure point for a variegated dynamical progression in which again a new topological transposition occurs, only this time from the exteriority of the purely extensional into the new—materialized—interiority of the ideal. As a whole, matter thus stands as much for the creation of externality to absoluteness, or an outside of the indifference which gives rise to it, as well as—and just as importantly—for the enablement of an *other side of itself*, which therefore turns out to be precisely an inside within the outside that matter itself is. Two topologizations of being, achieved through the original *unfolding* and the subsequent *infolding* of essence, are therefore at play.

Matter as a whole accordingly constitutes a transitional ontological spectrum whose values make up an inverse function relating layers of subjective interiority and an objective exteriority: the complex plotting of the outward assertion of essence's real presence, and of its internalization as ideal representation. And jointly, all of these functional values display the history of the development of the Idea: from the point of its inversion as it becomes actual, up until its full reconstitution and transposition into a new relatively autonomous interiority. To no small degree, if previous systems had foundered upon the cliff that is the elucidation of matter, it is precisely because they failed to understand that the material as a whole is only the transitional spectrum between two endpoints in which matter itself is not present: [43] the prototypical Idea and the actualized Idea—the former absolutely generative yet non-actual, buried in its own infinite intension; the latter, i.e., human consciousness, for the first time capable of meaningfully relating not only to the Idea but—though this would again push us beyond the purely rational—to that personal *ACTUS* who, with full haecceity, *IS* the Idea.

Indeed, just as for the first Idea actual matter is external, so too it is external for the actualized Idea—but, crucially, in an entirely different sense. For whereas the Idea has not itself been constituted by means of an actually existing matter which has been internalized, the actualized Idea has been precisely so constituted. That means that it is enveloped in its own genetic material history—and in fact inescapably so—since it cannot *be* in the absence of that history, given that all its representative determinations are identical to matter—in the Schellingian understanding of identity—qua unfolding of that history. The entire catalogue of our mindful representation is made up, indeed, of the innumerable steps through which nature

past disordered swell that is chaos in the absence of the lasting God-given bond of love, i.e., before its release into the cohesion of reason as self-identical.

[43] In the *Presentation of Purely Rational Philosophy* (SW XI: 386 ff.), Schelling celebrates Ch. A. Brandi's substantiation of the fact—attested by Plotinus already—that there is matter in Plato's eidetic world. But Schelling's Idea (the prototype of existence) does not correspond to Platonic ἰδέαι (*idéai*) but rather is the source of the eidetic configurations (*Gestaltungen*) which are of a kind with Platonic ἰδέαι (*idéai*). Of the prototypical Idea, which qua *Vernunft-Organismus* constitutes rather a certain way to envision the law of identity in its implication of the law of the ground, it may therefore be more exact to say not that it has matter as such (*pace* SW XI: 283), but that, *because its principles sustain material relations among them*, it is the prototypical source of matter—the watershed between the revolutions of chaos and the progression of actual existence.

first arose to the summit of mind. This is where the identity of the transcendental and nature-philosophical constructions of matter are welded together: in the fact that the outside dimension of the actualized Idea cannot be suppressed or ignored, since the inside of that actualized Idea is, though undeniably of a higher order than the outside, still absolutely impossible in the functional absence of that outside with which it is identical and through which it receives the ground of its existence. Unlike that first Idea which may or may not have given rise to its own periphery, this is not, in other words, an inside that could survive without the outside that bears it. The Idea could have remained never externalized, always mere intension, mere essence that never came to ex-ist. But human consciousness, as the homologous inside within the outside of the generative Idea, must have that outside, and must have it as something which is at once intimate and irreducibly different than itself: as its dark unknown root, as its radical and irrecoverable past. All actualization loses itself in darkness before it can see the light: "The seed must be sunk into the earth and die in darkness so that the more beautiful form of light may arise and unfold in the sunbeam" (SW VII: 360). And all of this is indeed a far cry from thinking matter as mere 'stuff.'

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The Philosophical Significance of Schelling's Plato Notebooks (1792–1794)[1]

Naomi Fisher

Prior to getting swept up into the new philosophy, Schelling was immersed in the old. Until the final year of his formal education at Tübingen, Schelling was engaged in classical philosophical and theological studies.[2] He wrote commentaries on several biblical texts, wrote and published a treatise on myth, and spent time engaging with Plato's dialogues and Platonism, especially insofar as Platonism affected the Biblical texts and the development of Christian doctrine.[3] The importance of these aspects of

[1] All Schelling references are to Schelling, *Historisch-kritische Ausgabe,* ed. Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1976; cited as AA) and—if the work appears there—Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke,* ed. K. F. A. Schelling (Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta, 1856-1861; cited as SW). All translations are mine; references to my translation of the notebooks are cited in footnotes. I am grateful to Jeffrey J. Fisher and Christopher Satoor for their feedback on a version of this essay.

[2] Schelling had been exposed to Kant and Reinhold early on; he writes his 1792 *specimina* for his philosophy degree on issues in Kantian theoretical and practical reason. The two *specimina*, titled *Über die Möglichkeit einer Philosophie ohne Beinamen, nebst einigen Bemerkungen über die Reinholdische Elementarphilosophie* and *Über die Übereinstimmung der Kritik der theoretischen und praktischen Vernunft, besonders in Bezug auf den Gebrauch der Categorien, und der Realisirung der Idee einer intelligibilen Welt durch ein Factum in der letzteren*, are unfortunately lost; we only have their titles. See W. G. Jacobs, *Zwischen Revolution und Orthodoxie: Schelling und seine Freunde im Stift und an der Universität Tübingen. Texte und Untersuchungen.* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1989), 72. Schelling also refers to Kant's third *Critique* in his 1794 *Timaeus*-commentary. But he only really abandons his studies in scripture, hermeneutics, and classics and devotes himself to the new philosophy after meeting Fichte in May of 1794. In early 1795, Schelling writes to Hegel, who has asked him about his studies, "Who would remain buried in the dust of antiquity when the course of his *own* time sweeps him up and away with every moment?" (AA III/1:16).

[3] Schelling would have been familiar with the work and likely attended the lectures of Christian Friedrich Rößler, a historian on the faculty and rector at Tübingen. Rößler had published a ten-volume series of translations of excerpts of the Church fathers, and who was himself steeped in Platonism, especially

Schelling's intellectual heritage is beginning to be recognized, especially for Schelling's late philosophy, when he returns to themes of mythology and revelation.[4] Accordingly, we can take as a working hypothesis that this early formation in the classical philosophical and theological traditions with an emphasis on the divine is important to Schelling's overarching philosophical orientation and development. While many of the authors and themes that Schelling engaged with at this time are no longer well-known to contemporary scholars, his engagement with Plato can offer a useful window into his philosophical orientation at that time. His notes and texts on Plato resonate in striking ways with his subsequent philosophical work, particularly in his commitment to a higher capacity in the human being which enables access to something which cannot be rendered in conceptual or discursive form.

Many of Schelling's notebooks and lectures survive and are currently being disseminated in critical editions and translations. His extant early notebooks have recently been published in the *Nachlass* editions of the *Historical-Critical Edition* (*Historische-Kritische Ausgabe*) of his work (AA *Reihe* II). Portions of these notebooks offer a window into Schelling's engagement with Plato during his time as a student at the Tübinger Stift. These appeared in AA II/4 in 2013 as "Types of Representation of the Ancient World" ("*Vorstellungsarten der alten Welt*," dated 1792) and in AA II/5 in 2016 as "On the Spirit of the Platonic Philosophy" ("*Über den Geist der platonischen Philosophie*") and the attached *Timaeus*-commentary (dated 1794, and likely completed in the early months of that year). This latter work is the most substantial and sustained of these portions of the notebooks. In this work, Schelling combines the creation myth of the *Timaeus* and the four principles of being put forth in Plato's *Philebus* with elements of Kant's Critical philosophy. This commentary has been independently available since 1994 in a stand-alone volume and has been available in English since the 2008 translation published in *Epoché*.[5] A transcription and commentary on the other two portions of the notebook have been available in Michael Franz's dissertation, published in 1996 as *Schelling's Tübingen Plato Studies* (*Schellings Tübinger Platon-Studien*). As a result, Schelling's engagement with Plato is now becoming more widely known, and several important works have addressed the *Timaeus*-commentary

middle Platonism. See Michael Franz, *Tübinger Platonismus: Die gemeinsamen philosophischen Anfangsgründe von Hölderlin, Schelling, und Hegel* (Marburg: Francke Verlag, 2012), 61–71, where he argues that Rößler was a significant influence on Hölderlin, Schelling, and Hegel.

[4] See, for example, recent work by Sean McGrath, including *The Philosophical Foundations of the Late Schelling: the Turn to the Positive* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021); Chelsea Harry, "Schelling and Plato" in *Palgrave Schelling Handbook,* ed. Sean McGrath, Kyla Bruff, and Joseph Carew (London: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming), especially her sections on the role of recollection in *Ages of the World*, and how Schelling in his Berlin lectures portrays myth as sublating both the material and the spiritual, pointing toward a primordial unity.

[5] F.W.J. Schelling, *Timaeus (1794)*, ed. Hartmut Buchner (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog Verlag 1994); "Timaeus (1794)," trans. Adam Arola, Jena Jolissaint, and Peter Warnek, *Epoché* 12, no. 2 (2008): 205–248.

and its significance for Schelling's philosophy, particularly in his philosophy of nature.[6]

In light of growing interest in Schelling's early engagement with Plato, I have translated these two shorter portions of the Plato notebooks into English. The translation appears in *Epoché* as "Schelling's Plato Notebooks, 1792–1794."[7] What we find in these pages is not a philosophical treatise, and so in this way these portions of the notebooks are quite unlike the *Timaeus*-commentary. In these two sections, Schelling moves back and forth between German translations of the Greek, unfinished notes, and prose reflections. Nevertheless, these less sustained treatments of Plato offer a more complete picture of which dialogues Schelling was engaged with in his time as a student, his thematic focus, and what he garnered from these works. While the *Timaeus* and *Philebus* are addressed in these pages, we also see Schelling engaging with other dialogues and Platonic themes that are not addressed in the *Timaeus*-commentary.

In this essay I present aspects of the philosophical significance of these portions of the notebooks, briefly noting the various echoes of Plato's influence in Schelling's subsequent philosophical work. I treat the themes and corresponding dialogues in turn: First, I discuss divine dispensation, genius, and the fate of these notions in what Schelling later terms intellectual intuition. The crucial dialogues for Schelling here are the *Ion* and *Meno*. Second, I turn to the person of Socrates and the nature of philosophy. Here, the crucial dialogues are the *Theaetetus* and the *Theages*. I conclude with a brief précis of potential further avenues for exploring these notebooks.

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[6] Hermann Krings ("Genesis und Materie – Zur Bedeutung der *Timaeus*-Handschrift für Schellings Naturphilosophie," in *Timaeus (1794)*) offers an explication primarily in terms of the philosophy of nature. Manfred Baum ("The Beginnings of Schelling's Philosophy of Nature," in *The Reception of Kant's Critical Philosophy in German Idealism,* ed. Sally Sedgwick [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000] 199–215), gives a helpful reading in terms of the context of *Timaeus* interpretation at the time. Werner Beierwaltes ("Plato's *Timaeus* in German Idealism: Schelling and Windischmann" in *Plato's* Timaeus *as Cultural Icon*, ed. Gretchen Reydam-Schils [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003], 267–289, takes issue with the narrowness of the focus on Schelling's philosophy of nature in previous literature and gives an interpretation of the commentary as relevant to Schelling's broader philosophical concerns. Karin Nisenbaum ("Schelling's Systematization of Kant's Moral Philosophy: Divine Craftsmanship as the Human Moral *Telos*" in *Schellings Freiheitsschrift: Methode, System, Kritik*, ed. Thomas Buchheim, Thomas Frisch, and Nora C. Wachsmann [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021], 467–492) relates the *Timaeus*-commentary to Schelling's early essays, arguing that Schelling offers a much-needed systematization of Kant's philosophy through a morally-inflected interpretation of the creative activity of the demiurge. See also Naomi Fisher and Jeffrey Fisher, "Schelling and the *Philebus*: Limit and the Unlimited in Schelling's Philosophy of Nature," *Epoché* (forthcoming 2022) for an explication of Schelling's account of the four principles of the *Philebus* in relation to the world soul of the *Timaeus*, and how these themes inform interpretation of Schelling's 1798 *On the World Soul* (cf. Schelling, *Von der Weltseele*, AA I/6; SW II: 345–569).

[7] Naomi Fisher, "Schelling's Plato Notebooks, 1792–1794," *Epoché* 26, no. 1 (2021): 109–131.

From Divine Dispensation to Intellectual Intuition: Schelling's Interpretation of Plato's *Ion*

The portion of the notebooks dated "August 1792" begin with an epigraph from the *Timaeus* (reproduced in the Greek by Schelling): "Wherefore one ought to distinguish two kinds of causes [αἰτίας, *aitias*], the necessary [ἀναγκαῖον, *anankaion*] and the divine, and in all things to seek after the divine for the sake of gaining a life of blessedness" (AA II/4: 15).[8] This contrast between the necessary, which Schelling aligns with the natural, and the divine informs the following pages. Schelling begins by discussing Plato's *Ion*. This discussion then expands to include various other Platonic dialogues, including the *Meno*, *Apology*, *Philebus,* and *Timaeus*.[9] One major important feature of this discussion is that Schelling separates out various activities—poetry, divination, prophecy, rhapsody, the development of virtue, and genius more generally—as divine power (θεία δύναμις [*theia dunamis*]) or divine dispensation (θεία μοῖρα [*theia moira*]), and contrasts these kinds of activities with anything that can be developed or learned in a natural way, including through ordinary human cognition. Important features of divine power is that it is a human capacity, it lacks a natural explanation, and it involves connecting things into a unique and singular "harmonious whole."

This contrast foreshadows and informs Schelling's distinction between intellectual intuition and theoretical philosophy in his early essays and the corresponding distinction between reason and reflection in the early 1800s, as well as subsequent and related contrasts, e.g., positive vs. negative philosophy. The distinction most clearly invokes Plato in Schelling's 1802 dialogue *Bruno*, where this epigraph of the *Timaeus* is given a nod in the subtitle—*On the Divine and Natural Principle of Things*—and this distinction is present in the text as absolute vs. theoretical cognition. Rather than examining the nature of this contrast in Schelling's subsequent works of philosophy, I here offer an exposition of the distinction as it is present in this notebook in order to facilitate comparisons and inform interpretations in future literature.

Schelling quotes extensively from Plato's *Ion*, leaving the quotations fully untranslated, apart from a few German paraphrases. In this short dialogue, Socrates convinces the Homeric rhapsode Ion that the activity of a rhapsode is not a craft (τέχνη [*technē*]), but rather is a divine dispensation, derivative of the divine power of the poet. As the rhapsode is to the poet, so the prophet is to the seer; just as the prophet communicates and explains the insensate divinations of the seer, so the rhapsode both performs and interprets the divinely inspired deliverances of the poet. To demonstrate this relationship to the divine, Socrates uses the image of the lodestone, the magnetic power of which is conducted through iron rings. There is a

[8] Plato, "Timaeus," trans. W. R. M. Lamb, in *Loeb Classical Library Plato,* vol. 9 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1925), 68e; Schelling, "Plato Notebooks," 110.

[9] The focus remains on Platonic dialogues throughout AA II/4: 15–25; Schelling, "Plato Notebooks," 110–119.

conduit of divine power from the muse (lodestone), to the poet (first ring), to the rhapsode (middle ring), and finally to the spectator (last ring).[10]

After laying out these basic features of the dialogue, Schelling moves on to theorize in his own voice about the nature of divine power.[11] Schelling reiterates and endorses the contrast in *Ion* between divine power and natural human knowledge characteristic of a craft. He states:

> Characteristic poetic power operates according to laws, of which the poet himself is not distinctly conscious, and which for others are even less cognizable. The product of the poet is in this way a miraculous effect, of which one cannot discover the natural cause. It appears quite suddenly before the eyes of the astonished, who, just as God brought forth the world from chaos, brought it forth from an overflowing abundance of representations and sensations. It is a lightning flash of sensation, of emotional capacities, of the power of thought and combination, with which he ceaselessly awakens new emotions, springs from sensation to sensation, from thought to thought, and connects everything in one harmonious whole. In short, it is an effect for which he himself never sees the complete series of causes and effects, and which the common person cannot think at all. Continue to ask what genius is, says, if I am not mistaken, Rousseau: If you do not yourself possess it, you ask in vain (AA II/4: 18–19).[12]

Poetic power is here identified as a type of genius and as something that lacks a natural explanation. Moreover, we see that Schelling here is thinking of genius in terms of the interconnection of thoughts into a "harmonious whole". A few pages down, Schelling emphasizes that such a whole is singular: "But above all there are thoughts and feelings of a poet, which one can only say well in a single way" (AA II/4: 22n).[13] The act of the poet, whereby he compresses his thoughts and feelings into a harmonious whole, is unique; it cannot be done in some other way.

Schelling generalizes this account of poetic genius to all acts of the human understanding: "This power, which is incomprehensible to the common human being, operates in individual human beings not only in the art of poetry—it operates

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[10] Plato, "Ion," trans. W. R. M. Lamb, *in Loeb Classical Library Plato,* vol. 8 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), 535e–536d. Some have taken this dialogue to be fully ironic, i.e., Socrates is toying with the rhapsode Ion and takes the activity of the poets, rhapsodes, seers, prophets and so on to be shameful, since these are not crafts and not based on any kind of knowledge. See Rüdiger Bubner, *Innovations of Idealism*, trans. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), specifically 12–13 for a discussion of Goethe's (and Bubner's) interpretation of this dialogue as ironic. The young Schelling takes Plato's Socrates to be in earnest; Bubner takes this to be a clear misreading. However, it is worth noting that Socrates' invocations of the divine are not frequently ironic, and even if Plato has a low view of contemporaneous poets, his treatment of Homer and Hesiod is not so dismissive. It is at least not obvious that Socrates is being ironic when calling Homer, Hesiod, and their rhapsodes "divine."

[11] See AA II/4: 18–25; Schelling, "Plato Notebooks," 114–119 for such theorizing.

[12] Schelling, "Plato Notebooks," 114

[13] Schelling, "Plato Notebooks," 116n8.

in each work of human understanding" (AA II/4: 19).[14] The idea here is clearly not that all human cognitive activity is genius, since Schelling indicates that only certain individuals possess it. He means, rather, that each realm of the activity of the understanding admits of genius, including philosophy. Given that Schelling's later divisions in cognition can best be seen as tracking something like systematic conceptual thought (going under the name of reflection or theoretical cognition) and some extra-systematic intuitive insight (termed variously intellectual intuition, reason, and absolute cognition), this operation of inexplicable divine power or genius in *all* acts of the human understanding warrants further attention.

One can, *prima facie*, consider three competing interpretations of the relationship of this divine power or genius to systematic thought on display in these passages:

A. Genius *helps* in systematic theorizing. A genius thus has the capacities of an ordinary human being, but to a much higher degree, such that they can engage in theorizing and arrive at insights more quickly and accurately.

B. Geniuses have insights which are originally inexpressible in terms of the current conceptual system, but that subsequently come to be expressed by that system.

C. Genuises have insights that affect the shape or progress of a system, but such insights cannot be incorporated into that system; they are inexpressible not just in terms of the current conceptual system, but in terms of conceptual thought more generally.

Schelling's account here is clearly not A. He refers to the discussion in *Meno* of whether virtue can be taught: "So he says in *Meno*: virtue cannot be *learned* (thus cannot be effected through *empirical* means or empirically observed in its progress), hence it is a divine gift" (AA II/4: 21).[15] Divine power names something that cannot be effected in an empirical way and thus requires something beyond nature or ordinary empirical means to bring it about. Normal conceptual activities can be improved with training and study and are not merely the purview of a few extraordinary individuals.

Neither is Schelling advancing B. One could cite the following passage defense of B, since here Schelling indicates that genius is involved in finding an elusive sentence that serves as a lynchpin for a system:

> What thoughtful mind has not had the experience, after having long grasped for an obscurely hinted sentence, which he always lost again in an enveloping sea of representations as frequently as he sought to hold onto it—often, this

[14] Schelling, "Plato Notebooks," 114

[15] Schelling, "Plato Notebooks," 115. See Plato, "Meno," trans. W. R. M. Lamb in *Loeb Classical Library Plato,* vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924), 98c–99d.

> very sentence would suddenly appear to him bright and distinct and in exact connection with other sentences, after which he was suddenly awoken in that chaos as if by a higher stream of light, the disparate elements divided, the similar flew to one another. … Here θεία μοῖρα [*theia moira*, *divine dispensation*] appears to have played a role in the first surprise, yet still it was art, but one continually operating in silence, the inborn art of the soul, which had led him there (AA II/4: 19-20).[16]

Here one is tempted to take Schelling to mean that genius is in fact insight into that "hinted sentence," that conceptual formulation which is the keystone of the whole system. But Schelling asserts that there is an art of the soul, in this context, a teachable craft, which is doing the work here. The art leads the person to the precipice, but then a divine dispensation *plays a role* in the newfound formulations. And so it is perhaps a more fitting interpretation of this passage that the genius is struck by an insight via divine dispensation which makes possible a felicitous reorganization of the whole system, but in terms of a sentence which is arrived at and expressed through ordinary human thought. Like genius, the one who does not possess it can never understand it. It is not merely that the insight is one that the non-genius does not *yet* understand because it is not *yet* incorporated into a system, but rather is one that they will never understand because they do not possess it.

The C-interpretation offers a more cohesive account of genius as something that is manifested both in poetry and in conceptual systematic progress. As described by Schelling and explicated above, poetic insight is insight into a singular harmonious whole. A poem is a harmonious whole, and the characteristic gift of the poet is the ability to express in a singular, particular way something that cannot be expressed in conceptual thought or in a general way. If divine power operates in systematic thought in an analogous way, one can treat genius in the context of systematic thought similarly, i.e., as insight into a harmonious whole, which cannot be exhausted by any theoretical, interpretive expressions of it. While interpretations of a poem are expressions of the insight of the poem, such interpretations are always reductive and could never fully capture the poem itself. Similarly, conceptual thought might be the expression of the characteristic insight of a genius, but such insight is never fully captured by that thought. Such insight could nevertheless enable a felicitous reorganization and reorientation of a conceptual system.

This relation between poetry and philosophy is in accord with Schelling's later comparison between the two in his *Bruno*; this 1802 dialogue invites comparisons to Plato in its form and content. There, Schelling's character Anselm offers an account of philosophy and poetry as complementary activities, both expressing the highest unity of truth and beauty.[17] The poet is "possessed by" absolute truth and beauty, but

[16] Schelling, "Plato Notebooks," 114–115.

[17] See AA I/11: 349-355; SW IV: 226–232. I take it to be clear from the context that Schelling agrees with these particular points made by Anselm, but a defense of this interpretive point is outside the scope of this article.

"least in possession" of it, and therefore expresses in a necessarily *exoteric* way the unity of truth and beauty in their works of poetry, but in a way that is entirely inaccessible to that poet internally. The philosopher, on the other hand, is in possession of the truth and beauty internally but cannot express it externally. Accordingly, philosophy is "necessarily and according to its nature esoteric, and there is no need to maintain secrecy, rather, it is much more secretive through itself" (AA I/11: 355; SW IV: 232). Just as indicated in the discussion in the notebooks, the poet acts as a cognitively unaware conduit for complete, holistic expressions of absolute truth and beauty, and is in this way analogous to the seer, as discussed in *Ion*. The philosopher is analogous to the prophet, as discussed in *Ion*, since she perceives the whole and has a complete internal awareness, but the discursive expression of that which she has access to is always partial, derivative, and inadequate.

In Schelling's 1802 *Further Presentations,* he refers to Plato explicitly, invoking passages from the *Meno* also discussed in the notebooks in which Socrates claims that virtue is a divine dispensation (θεία μοῖρα [*theia moira*]).[18] He compares intellectual intuition to virtue in its teachability:

> One might ask of [intellectual intuition] what Plato asked of virtue: can it be learned or not, is it gained through practice, or perhaps it can be attained neither through instruction nor studiousness, but is rather inborn by nature, or conferred to humans through a divine portion [*göttliches Geschick*]? Clearly it is not something that can be taught. All attempts to teach it are thus completely useless in scientific philosophy (AA I/12: 102-03; SW IV: 361).[19]

Here, Schelling's discussion of intellectual intuition reiterates claims made in the notebooks regarding divine power and genius: that this is something that, like virtue, cannot be taught. Intellectual intuition is the starting point of philosophy; those who do not possess intellectual intuition are thereby remote from philosophy (AA I/12: 103; SW IV: 362). There are strong parallels between intellectual intuition here and divine power and genius in the notebooks. Both refer to something that is irrevocably inaccessible to the one who does not already possess it.

Thus we already see in these early notebooks a defining feature of Schelling's philosophical orientation, which he finds in Plato, namely: there is an aspect of philosophy that remains always outside the reach of conceptual articulation, that cannot be made exoteric. This is a crucial feature of Schelling's philosophical perspective throughout his life, and we find the seeds of it here expressed in his reading of Plato.

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[18] Plato, "Meno," 98c–99e, and especially 100b; compare AA II/4: 21; "Plato Notebooks," 115–116.

[19] Given the resonances of this passage with the 1792 Plato notebooks, it is likely that by *göttliches Geschick* (*divine portion*) Schelling has in mind θεία μοῖρα (*theia moira*), which I have rendered "divine dispensation," but which, like *Geschick*, also has connotations of fate, portion, or fortune. Schelling's drawing together "inborn by nature" with "divine portion" also follows Schelling's claims regarding "natural inspiration" as another way of expressing divine dispensation at AA II/4: 22; Schelling, "Plato Notebooks," 116.

Socrates and the Nature of Philosophy

In several sections of the notes from both 1792 and 1794, Schelling discusses the person of Socrates, particularly in relation to the nature of philosophy. He presents Socrates as possessing a divine power in the form of a daimon. Moreover, Socrates is presented as a prophet, since his discussions are expressions of that divine power, and he is guided by that daimon in his philosophical interactions.

Schelling notes many passages in which Socrates refers to his "god" or daimon. On the topic of Socrates' daimon, Schelling may have been influenced by a 1699 text by the French theologian Matthieu Souverain, and translated by Josias Friedrich Löffler in 1790-1792 as *Essay on the Platonism of the Church Fathers, or Investigation of the Influence of Platonic Philosophy on the Doctrine of the Trinity in the First Century* (*Versuch über den Platonimus der Kirchenväter, Oder Untersuchung über den Einfluß der Platonischen Philosophie auf die Dreieinigkeitslehre in den ersten Jahrhundert*).[20] Souverain offers an account of Socrates' frequent appeals to his "god" or daimon as appeals to the rational part of Socrates' soul by which he participates in the divine. He cites affirmingly other ancient sources which also assert that reason is a kind of daimon.[21] Schelling similarly treats Socrates' genius as something internal to him. He differs from Souverain in highlighting the manner in which this power reaches beyond the natural capacities of human beings and is not a *universal* human capacity, but a gift or dispensation reserved for a few. This power is beyond the ordinary discursive capacities of human beings and is expressed in the terms genius and divine power, and is analogous to the characteristic power of seers and poets. Again, one can see how this view of Socrates' daimon resonates with later central features of Schelling's philosophy under the concepts of intellectual intuition, reason, true philosophy, and absolute cognition.

On Schelling's reading, not only does Socrates hear the voice of this daimon, and thus have some kind of conduit to the divine, but he also has the power analogous to that of the rhapsode or prophet, in that he is able to "interpret" those deliverances. Socrates is a prophet, one who interprets and speaks for that which is divine:

> The *universal* concept of προφήτης [*prophētēs*, prophet] is with Plato overall this one: *speaker of divinity*, *interpres divum*. This is evident e.g. in the passage from the *Philebus* where Protarch says: "καὶ δέομαί γε, ὦ Σώκρατες, αὐτόν σε ἡμῖν

[20] Schelling mentions Josias Friedrich Löffler's translation of this work in some early notes dated to 1793/4 and his 1792 commentary on the letter to the Romans. See AA II/4: 86; AA II/5: 99. The importance of this work can also be seen in Schelling's other treatments of middle Platonism and his treatment of figures such as Philo of Alexandria and Clement.

[21] "One need only a little instruction in the allegorical methods of these times in order to understand: with the expressions genius, daimon, heavenly voice, one has meant nothing other than that Socrates, through the power of his own genius and his own reason, which he always consulted, understood this divine voice of nature, which proclaims the creator to us" (Matthieu Souverain, *Versuch über den Platonimus der Kirchenväter, Oder Untersuchung über den Einfluß der Platonischen Philosophie auf die Dreieinigkeitslehre in den ersten Jahrhundert*, trans. Josias Friedrich Löffler (Frommann: Züllichau und Freistadt, 1790–1792), 53.

> γενέσθαι προφήτην [*kai deomai ge, ō Sōkrates, auton se hēmīn genesthai prophētēn hermēnea ton theon*, and I ask you, Socrates, to be our prophet yourself]," i.e., as one sees from the context ἑρμηνέα τὸν θεόν [*hermēnea ton theon,* interpreter of the god], because earlier Socrates had spoken of "his god" (the daimon which resides in him) (AA II/4: 23).[22]

Socrates is thus a prophet because he can interpret the non-discursive deliverances of this "god" or daimon. Asserted throughout the text is a distinction between the inarticulate deliverances of the divine through a seer or poet, on the one hand, and the interpretation of those divine deliverances, on the other. Socrates internally possesses the former and externally performs the latter.

There is still, nevertheless, a disconnect between these capacities. Just as an interpretation of a poem is no substitute for the poem itself, there is something in Socrates' daimon which cannot be communicated through teaching. The capacity for true philosophy must somehow already exist in a student if it is to be brought to fruition through Socrates' interaction with that student. This "divine power" is only passed on only to those whom the God favors, i.e., those who also possess this divine power inchoately. In his 1794 notes, Schelling cites passages in the *Theaetetus* and *Theages,* in which Socrates claims that the voice of the daimon warns him that certain people will not benefit from his interaction. The transmission of philosophy from Socrates to his followers is in some way determined by the divine and cannot be controlled or carried out through ordinary teaching. Schelling thus states, "One could not learn philosophy from Socrates, but rather to philosophize" (AA II/5: 142n).[23] And, as Schelling emphasizes, not everyone has the capacity to learn to philosophize, since not everyone has access to the divine power which is essential to that activity.

Again, we here see some of the distinctive elements of Schelling's philosophical orientation coming through. Schelling is asserting an essential, but esoteric element of philosophical activity. That which truly grounds philosophy is inarticulable and thus nondiscursive, never fully captured in conceptual thought, even while this capacity shapes and guides the formation of conceptual systems. In Schelling's early notebooks, he describes Plato's Socrates, the paradigmatic philosopher, in this way. Socrates has internal access to the divine which guides his discussions, though these discussions neither fully express nor transmit that divine element.

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[22] Schelling, "Plato Notebooks," 117.

[23] Schelling, "Plato Notebooks," 125n25. A similar view of the transmission of philosophy from teacher to student is presented in Plato's "Seventh Letter" (see Plato, "Epistle VII," trans. R. G. Bury in *Loeb Classical Library Plato,* vol. 9 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929), especially 341b–344c). While it is unclear if Schelling read this letter directly, Jacobi quotes from this portion of the letter (in Latin) in the 1785 and 1789 editions of his *Spinoza-Letters* (Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Ueber die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* [Breslau: Löwe: 1785], 109–110; 2nd ed. [Breslau: Löwe, 1789], 153–154; *Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Moses Mendelssohn* in *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel* Allwill*,* trans. George di Giovanni [Montréal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1994], 214). Schelling was, of course, quite familiar with this text, and quotes from the 1789 edition in his early essays.

Further Possible Avenues of Exploration

Schelling's reading of Plato should be read in the context of his time; the Platonism of his era is not the same as what we, twenty-first century philosophers, typically refer to as Platonism. We divide Plato's dialogues into early, middle, and late; we focus on the middle dialogues (e.g., the *Republic, Phaedo,* and *Meno*) as paradigmatic expressions of Platonism. Our 'Platonism' typically includes two separate realms of being and becoming, the theory of the forms, recollection, the tripartite soul, and so on. The Platonism of Schelling's milieu predates the historical-critical methods of the nineteenth century, and the corresponding dismissal of Neoplatonic readings of Plato. In contrast, Schelling treats the entirety of Plato's corpus, including what we now consider (possibly) apocryphal dialogues, as a unity. This entire corpus is rendered intelligible and cohesive by a framework of interpretation developed throughout the classical tradition, especially in Neoplatonism.

The Platonism of this tradition is a Platonism of a single, highest, generative principle, which cannot be thought by διάνοια (*dianoia*) or discursive rationality.[24] This interpretive tradition treats certain dialogues as central; among these central dialogues are those which Schelling studied intensively: the *Philebus* and *Timaeus*.[25] Schelling's textual focus and interpretive framework are clearly indebted to this interpretive tradition, but are also informed by the critical care (and sometimes, Enlightenment skepticism) of scholars such as Jakob Brucker, Victor Lebrecht Pleßing, and Dietrich Tiedemann. Many such scholars regard some aspects or figures of the classical tradition—Neoplatonism especially—as metaphysically excessive.[26] Schelling writes these notebooks in the context of this transition from classical to historical-critical eras. Schelling's own orientation and proclivities can be clarified through an examination of where he places himself within the old and emergent interpretive traditions.[27]

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[24] See, for example, Plotinus, *The Enneads*, trans. and ed. Lloyd P. Gerson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 6.9.6, especially 6.9.6.13-15: "And again when you unify [the One] by discursive thinking [καὶ αὖ ὅταν αὐτὸν ἑνίσηις τῆι διανοίαι, *kai au hotan auton henisēis tēi dianoiāi*], then, too, it is more than you imagine, in being more unified than your thinking of it. For it is in itself, since it has no attributes." For a brief overview of Platonism in this tradition, see Lloyd Gerson, *Aristotle and Other Platonists* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 24–46.

[25] Surprisingly, Schelling does not appear to have read the *Parmenides* while at Tübingen, although this is of course another central dialogue for this tradition.

[26] See, e.g., Dietrich Tiedemann, *Dialogorum Platonis Argumenta* (Biponti: Ex Typographia Societatis, 1786), 340, where he derides the particularly theological aspects of Proclus and Ficino. Tiedemann is more favorable to Plotinus; see, for instance, Tiedemann, *Geist der Spekulativen Philosophie,* vol. 3 (Marburg: Neuen akademischen Buchhandlungen, 1793), which praises Plotinus, but treats Proclus as falling into theurgic nonsense (519-20).

[27] Manfred Baum examines these issues in the *Timaeus*-commentary, framing Schelling's interpretive orientation with respect to Pleßing and Tennemann. See Manfred Baum, "The Beginnings of Schelling's Philosophy of Nature."

Relatedly, some of Schelling's 1792 notebook writings focus on miracle tales, for instance, of Pythagoras and Plato.[28] The significance of these stories—for instance, of divine conception—is briefly explained by Schelling:

> But certainly the *truth* also in large part grounds [Porphyry's miracle-tales of Pythagoras], and it is much more believable that he wanted to give an example precisely of this history: how from certain *fact* tales could originate, for which that fact provides the ground, but which nevertheless raise that fact far above the truth (AA II/4: 27).[29]

In his 1794 notebook writings, Schelling expresses the same sentiment about Plato's myths: they express an ahistorical claim historically, because the ahistorical claim is, to some degree, mysterious and paradoxical.[30] And so that which cannot be adequately expressed in direct theoretical propositions is expressed in historical fact or fictional tales. The truth of the historical fact is not the point; Schelling seems to be saying that historical truth is sublated by something higher. Aspects of this treatment of myth and history may be relevant in discussions of Schelling's philosophy of art, revelation, and mythology.[31]

These notebooks resonate with much of Schelling's philosophical work and offer a window into Schelling's philosophical orientation just prior to his introduction to Fichte. My hope is that the translated notebooks together with this essay will help to provide a more thorough understanding of the ways in which Schelling's engagement with Plato while at Tübingen informed his work throughout his career.

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[28] These are recounted at AA II/4: 25–27; "Plato Notebooks" 119–121.

[29] Schelling, "Plato Notebooks," 121.

[30] "Plato wants to express [the connection of the mortal with the immortal in human beings]—but he expresses it *historically* … the main claim is just the ahistorical—the mysterious unification of the mortal and immortal, the pure and empirical in human beings" (AA II/5: 138; Schelling, "Plato Notebooks," 123–124).

[31] See the final sections of Harry, "Schelling and Plato," for an exploration of this topic in the context of Schelling's Berlin lectures.

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Rekindling Nature: Freedom, Time, and the In-Itself

Juan Felipe Guevara-Aristizabal

In the *Freedom Essay*, before formulating what he considers to be the central philosophical problem concerning human freedom—the capacity for good and evil—Schelling unpacks some remarks about logic and the uses of the copula as well as a very brief comment on Kant's use of the concept of the in-itself within the domain of practical philosophy:

> It will always remain odd, however, that Kant, after having first distinguished things-in-themselves from appearances only negatively through their independence from time and later treating independence from time and freedom as correlate concepts in the metaphysical discussions of his *Critique of Practical Reason*, did not go further toward the thought of transferring this only possible positive concept of the in-itself also to things; thereby he would immediately have raised himself to a higher standpoint of reflection and above the negativity that is the character of his theoretical philosophy. From another perspective, however, if freedom really is the positive concept of the in-itself, the investigation concerning human freedom is thrown back again into the general, in so far as the intelligible on which it was alone grounded is also the essence of things-in-themselves (SW VII: 351-352).[1]

[1] F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (Albany: SUNY, 2006), 22.

Schelling's move from the exclusively human to things, to nature, when it comes to matters of freedom, seems like a direct challenge to Kant, while still pursuing the latter's most popular motto: "*Sapere aude!* Have courage to use your *own* understanding!" (Ak. VIII: 35).[2] Instead of presenting Schelling's efforts within this enlightened frame of daring and courage, I will try to present it as a matter of care, of asking difficult questions that escape any preconceived answer,[3] of thinking the unspeakable that is latent in the present—this is how the task of rekindling nature begins.

The intrusion of freedom into nature deviates from the actual issue of the *Freedom Essay*. It is precisely because of that move that Schelling halts that course of discussion, tackling instead the specific problem of human freedom. It is also precisely because of that move that I would like to revisit Schelling's beginning in order to pursue a different direction. The conceptual network that he outlines with freedom, the in-itself, time, and nature, invites us to retrace the different ties that bind them together. I would like to address the formation of such an entanglement with two questions: What kind of time could make sense of freedom? And what are the implications of acknowledging the positive concept of the in-itself in nature? They will make us roam about the past, a subject that famously haunted Schelling, to find in the productivity of nature the expression of its freedom. Furthermore, once the positive in-itself has come into nature, human freedom can no longer look the same. Another intrusion, that of the Anthropocene, disrupts and thwarts those assumptions, making space for another history and, lastly, for a consideration of responsibility and politics that remains within the threshold of an insinuation.

Freedom and Time in Kant's Critical Approach

Freedom is quite an interesting research subject in Kant's critical period. It appears in each one of the three *Critiques*. In the first one, it is the opposite of mechanical causality, hence of nature. In the second one, it is what makes possible human agency. In the third, it is what needs to be reconciled or linked with nature in order to guarantee the possibility of a system of philosophy. Given these three different, though interconnected, approaches to freedom, it is noteworthy that Schelling chose the second one to point out the possibility of bringing together nature and freedom when it was actually used by Kant to perform the opposite task. The concept of freedom deployed in the second *Critique* marks its ultimate divergence from nature—freedom is not bound to temporal determinations.[4]

Kant's engagement with freedom begins with a blunt assertion: "The moral law is given, as it were, as a fact of pure reason of which we are a priori conscious and

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[2] Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?," in *Kant: Practical Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 17.

[3] See Juan Felipe Guevara-Aristizabal, "Care to Ask," *Tapuya: Latin American Science, Technology and Society* 1, no. 1 (2018): 147-149.

[4] For Schelling, in contrast, the possibility of an active nature relies precisely on this issue.

which is apodictically certain, though it be granted that no example of exact observance of it can be found in experience," to the point that, "even if one were willing to renounce its apodictic certainty, it could not be confirmed by experience and thus proved a posteriori; and it is nevertheless firmly established of itself" (Ak. V: 47).[5] For Kant, freedom is a *fact of pure reason*, a notion that is given for any rational finite being, hence unquestionable and incontrovertible. In as much as freedom is nowhere to be found in experience, it is not mediated by sensibility, rendering reason alone capable of privileged and direct access to it.[6] Nevertheless, it is a fact of experience that free actions take place in nature. This is the context where the "metaphysical discussions of the *Critique of Practical Reason*," mentioned by Schelling in the previously quoted passage, develop. The discussions deal with the compatibility of understanding a moral deed as an action happening in time, hence as a succession of events that could be traced back to a specific cause in the past, and, at the same time, as a free action independent of time and susceptible of being judged as good or bad. In other words, the problem concerns how an action that takes place in nature, thus a phenomenon, could have a moral ground for judgment that belongs to freedom, a noumenon. What is at stake is the actuality of freedom: if moral actions were just phenomena and their causes were naturally or lawfully determined, then human agents would be subjected to fatalism and there would be no freedom at all.[7]

The discrepancies between freedom and causality, freedom and time, could be summarized in the following statement:

> For, from the first [natural necessity] it follows that every event, and consequently every action that takes place at a point of time, is necessary under the condition of what was in the preceding time. Now, since time past is no longer within my control, every action that I perform must be necessary by determining grounds that are not within my control, that is, I am never free at the point of time in which I act (Ak. V: 94).[8]

There is no *control* over the past—freedom *must not* have a past. Being past-less does not amount to an utter rejection of the empirical apprehension of an action. We are supposed to acknowledge, following Kant, that making sense of free actions empirically only renders them mechanical or psychological, but such an approach can never get to the ground of what makes them free. The experience of an action and its rational ground coexist, yet they inhabit very different planes. Kant's solution begins by uncoupling the causes of the action that could be identified in nature, in

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[5] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 41.

[6] See Lewis Beck, *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), 166-170.

[7] A deeper and further development of this subject could be found in Juan Felipe Guevara Aristizabal, "Tensiones temporales. Vida y organismo en el criticismo kantiano," *Estudios Kantianos, Marília* 7, no. 2 (2019): 33-54.

[8] Kant, *Practical Reason*, 77.

time, from the ground for moral judgment. This uncoupling is best seen in the human feeling of repentance. Despite actions having taken place in time, despite them being in an inaccessible past that seals them from being changed, the moral ground that makes possible the judgment from which repentance arises is available at any time:

> Reason, when it is a question of the law of our intelligible existence (the moral law), recognizes no distinction of time and asks only whether the event belongs to me as a deed and, if it does, then always connects the same feeling [of repentance] with it morally, whether it was done just now or long ago (Ak. V: 99).[9]

Its availability collapses the past, turning it into a point of no dimensions: the rising of repentance is indifferent to the moment in time in which the shameful action occurred. In a way, the moral ground of an action—freedom in its critical garments—is simultaneous with the moment in which the action is being judged. When it comes to freedom and moral judgments, there is an uncertain and uncanny feeling that present and past might be simultaneous. The moral ground of a judgement, however, is not part of the past because it belongs to freedom. The possibility of the temporal paradox, of the simultaneity of past and present, is discarded with Kant's characterization of freedom.

The independence from time that the feeling of repentance attests signals to freedom's main feature, its timelessness—freedom is out of time. This result is in turn possible thanks to Kant's unfolding of man into a natural entity, the *homo phenomenon*, and a rational and moral agent, the *homo noumenon* (Ak. VI: 239).[10] Hence, Kant's understanding of freedom is only valid for man. In stark contrast, Schelling's investigation on freedom, even though it concentrates on human freedom, does not begin with a consideration of it as a fact of reason, which allows him to highlight that freedom could also be transferred to things, despite the claim not being further developed. Like Kant, however, the extraction of freedom from a temporal matrix marked by succession also plays a key role in Schelling's discussion of human freedom.[11]

Two conclusions can be drawn from this brief exposition of Kant's notion of freedom. First, the divide between nature and freedom depends on time: everything

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[9] Kant, *Practical Reason*, 80.

[10] Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 65. It is also true that the differentiation between the sensible and the supersensible substratum of man conforms to Kant's commitment to the kind of freedom described above. Because the critical stance on freedom, as well as on many other concepts, starts by acknowledging the actuality of what is being asked, it ends up drawing a circle where the separation between the transcendental and the empirical prevents it from being vicious.

[11] Charlotte Alderwick, "Atemporal Essence and Existential Freedom in Schelling," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 23, no. 1 (2015): 115-137, has advanced an interesting take on this issue: freedom is atemporal because it implies an essence unable to fully determine a form—the form, the act, whose essence is freedom, may always diverge from that essence itself, which means that something that is in eternity may become temporal.

pertaining to the domain of nature is to be set in relations of succession and temporal order, while freedom is atemporal. Second, freedom pertains exclusively to that rational entity that can be unfolded following the axes of the sensible and the supersensible. Nature is relegated to necessity, to inertia and lifelessness [*Leblosigkeit*] (Ak. IV: 544).[12] After all, "*life* is the faculty of a being to act in accordance with laws of the faculty of desire," (Ak. V: 9n)[13] that is, life relies on will as a peculiar faculty of human reason. It is clear, then, that with Kant man has quenched the nature of its life.

The Past and the Abyss of Nature

Rekindling nature means repeating Schelling's beginning without retracing his very same steps. The repeated yet new beginning follows the aforementioned remarks from the introduction of the *Freedom Essay*, right before it dives into the problem of human freedom as such. There is one particular statement that I would like to turn into a question: How is it possible for Schelling to claim "that everything real (nature, the world of things) has activity, life and freedom as its ground?" (SW VII: 351)[14] Observations about Fichte and Kant flank this claim within the text, raising the stakes and risks. The kind of unity that forms the real and the ideal can follow neither Kant's critical model nor Fichte's synthetic model; it has to dwell within its own tensions and contradictions, keeping the tension between the two poles, nature and freedom, and without the possibility of resolving it into one or the other.

The previous section showed the importance of time when defining the actual place of freedom. It makes sense, then, to think that for freedom to be the ground of nature, something has to be done with time—a kind of time capable of articulating free actions without preventing the past from being active after it has passed is required. With Kant, the timelessness of freedom was uncovered, but that does not imply that there is no temporal mode for it. The temporality of freedom embraces the tensions and paradoxes that Kant tried to dismiss. But we have to be cautious: if past and present become simultaneous, they cannot be conflated or synthesized into one. Past and present need to remain differentiated in their simultaneity. To keep this difference at work, the past might be formulated in a manner that reflects the contemporaneity of past and present while signaling that if the past ever becomes or is synthesized in a present, or vice-versa, then this past is no longer the past—the past I am striving for is a past *yet to come*.[15] The question, hence,

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[12] Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, trans. Michael Friedman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 83.
[13] Kant, *Practical Reason*, 7n.
[14] Schelling, *Freedom*, 22.
[15] Iain Hamilton Grant, *Philosophies of Nature After Schelling* (London: Continuum, 2006), 205, ends his book with this formulation: "Schelling is not a forerunner of anything, but a precursor of philosophical solutions, or 'experiments in dynamic physics,' yet to come." The distinction that he introduces between a forerunner, someone who has already done what is at present in development, and a precursor, someone whose activity might set the course towards novelties that have not still been unfolded, is important for understanding the past that is yet to come.

that will set the course for the following exploration of Schelling's ideas could be stated as follows: What kind of temporality can render the past as always yet to come? Perhaps there is no better place to wonder about this question than in *The Ages of the World*, a project whose primary importance "lies in its collapse … for precisely that indeterminacy [of a future that was not thematized] obscures the final meaning of the past."[16] It is a work marked by Schelling's constant efforts to rewrite it and is yet unfinished, a work that speaks only about the past and was left to never get over it.[17] The past described by the *Ages* moves in a rotating fashion, as a result of the constant tension between an expansive and a contractive force or principle that struggles to break the rotation and begin something. However, the three versions emphasize different aspects of the tension. Following Tilottama Rajan, I will refer to the 1815 version of the *Ages* throughout because it "recasts the will as compulsive rather than voluntaristic,"[18] so that the darkness of the contractive force is ever-present and acting.

One of the earliest tracks of the kind of past I am looking for in the *Ages* appears linked to epigenesis. In the "Introduction," before any discussion of a particular age, Schelling faces the difficulties arising from the uneasiness that a finite being experiences when dealing with the infinity of the absolute or, for the matter at hand, eternity. In the *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, Schelling had already referred to this problem in relation to nature: "In nature, therefore, the whole absolute is knowable, although appearing nature produces only successively, and in (for us) endless development, what in true nature exists all at once and in an eternal fashion" (SW II: 342).[19] The *Ages* would follow a similar formulation: for finite beings bounded to vision, like us, everything goes through a "series of processes, one following the other, where the later always meshes with the earlier, brings it to maturity" (SW VIII: 203).[20] The link to epigenesis is more palpable in the *First Outline of a System of the*

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[16] Joseph P. Lawrence, "[Weltalter-Fragmente]." *Review of Metaphysics* 57, no. 2 (2003): 438.

[17] There are, of course, a few fragments of the transition and introduction to the second book, the book of the present, collected by Manfred Schröter. It is interesting that in languages like Spanish and French, where the three extant versions of the *Ages* have already been translated, these fragments have not. Bruno Vancamp, "Avant-propos du traducteur," in *Les Âges Du Monde. Versions Premières 1811 et 1813*, de F. W. J. Schelling (Brussels: Ousia, 1988), 36, the French translator, argues that those fragments are "so incoherent and, at the same time, crossed out to be of any use for the present translation." Fortunately, the new English translation of the 1811 version includes these fragments. Even though they constitute the beginning of the present, Schelling is quite insistent on thinking the past, another form of the past: "The past that belongs specifically to the earth has not been touched on in the previous discussion of the universal past. To comprehend its particular nature and destiny and thereby also the nature and destiny of humanity, we have to extend our story back to the remote beginnings of the earth." F. W. J. Schelling, *The Ages of the World: Book One: The Past (Original Version, 1811) plus Supplementary Fragments (1811-1813), Including a Fragment from Book Two (the Present) along with a Fleeting Glimpse into the Future*, trans. Joseph P. Lawrence (Albany: SUNY Press, 2019), 234.

[18] Tilottama Rajan, "'The Abyss of the Past': Psychoanalysis in Schelling's *Ages of the World* (1815)." *Romantic Circles*, December 2008, § 10, https://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/psychoanalysis/rajan/rajan.html

[19] F. W. J. Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, trans. Errol E. Harris and Peter Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 272.

[20] F. W. J. Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, trans. Jason M. Wirth (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), xxxviii.

Philosophy of Nature, where it resonates with Schelling's theory of the graduated series of stages in nature: "*all formation occurs through epigenesis*" (SW III: 61).[21] The conceptual appeal of epigenesis lies in its recourse to a formative drive, a concept that contains freedom: "Freedom is in the organic product because no simple productivity operates here, but a compound one, through which the appearance of freedom comes in the process of production" (SW III: 61n)[22]—thanks to the limitations exerted upon it by an antagonism with the process of production itself. Freedom has thus made its ingression into nature through the concept of epigenesis, which means, in turn, that epigenesis may designate a different form of time as well. The concept of epigenesis already hints at the past yet to come: the past is not left behind because it has already passed; it is retained and brought to maturity. But maturity is neither a final point or stage of development nor a synthesis in which the past becomes the present, attaining a higher order while concealing its very own essence—there is no possibility to "sublimate [*aufheben*] all duality" (SW VIII: 203).[23] The past is never fully determined; it remains simultaneous with the present by means of an indeterminacy that allows it to act without ever becoming present.

Epigenesis and its time pave the way for understanding the freedom that acts within nature. However, epigenesis is not a concept that Schelling uses in the *Ages*—it comes from the *Naturphilosphie* that precedes the whole project of the *Ages*. This is the result, I would venture to say, of a telling difference between the two undertakings. The *Ideas* and the *First Outline* posit the problem of the dynamic between the finite and the infinite in terms of a grasping, intuitive understanding trying to apprehend how the two are related. Epigenesis responds to this exigence. The *Ages*, in contrast, wonders how to express that dynamic—it is a struggle to express the inexpressible, whether it is expressed in the form of a narration of the known (the past), a presentation of the discerned (the present), or a prophecy of the intimated (the future). And so, Schelling asks: "Why cannot what is known in the highest knowledge also be narrated with the rectitude and simplicity of all else that is *known*?" (SW VIII: 199).[24] Despite the apparent divergence of efforts, *Naturphilosophie* and the problem of expression run hand in hand:

> The farmer, for example, sees the progression in the plant as well as the scholar does, and yet the farmer cannot actually contemplate the plant because he cannot hold the moments apart from each other and cannot consider them separately and in their reciprocal opposition (SW VIII: 203-4).[25]

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[21] F. W. J. Schelling, *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*, trans. Keith R. Peterson (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004), 48.
[22] Schelling, *First Outline*, 48n.
[23] Schelling, *Ages*, xxxviii.
[24] Schelling, *Ages*, xxxv. Immediately after this question, he also asks about the future: "What holds back that intimated golden age in which truth again becomes fable and fable again becomes truth?".
[25] Schelling, *Ages*, xxxviii.

There is a Heideggerian lure in this contrast between the farmer and the scholar: the temptation to take the farmer as the representative of a more originary form of life opposed to the derivative theoretical mode of the scholar. I shall refrain from adopting that position and remain within Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*. The farmer and the scholar stand for two different ways of approaching continuity in nature. For the farmer, continuity is a matter of forces unfolding throughout the development of the plant, a process that takes place in an intensive field where no discrete components could be set apart, not even the subject from the object. The scholar, on the other side, conceives an aggregate of isolated and independent parts, yet in mutual interconnection. Schelling's speculative physics, though it endorses a task no less theoretical than the one of the scholar he portrays, strives toward the farmer's vision. Hence, the question is not, whose approach is more originary, for the subject is a constitutive part of nature: "As soon, however, as I separate myself, and with me everything ideal, from nature, nothing remains to me but a dead object, and I cease to comprehend how a *life outside* me can be possible" (SW II: 47-8).[26] Rather, it is a matter of rekindling nature, of expressing what cannot be expressed in words.

The enigma of expressibility runs through the whole of the *Ages*, even if we are only left with fragmentary vestiges of it: "The fragment," states Joan Steigerwald, "thus becomes the projection of what it incompletes … But the individuality of the fragment also suggests an organic wholeness."[27] The fragment suggests, but it can never complete or be completed. Hence, the fragment endures, as well as the past, the fate of remaining always a beginning: "But the beginnings are precisely what is essential. One who does not know them can never come back to the whole" (SW VIII: 271).[28] Schelling's remarks on the beginning are, as a consequence, also important for understanding the kind of time I am looking for. There are two types of beginnings: actual and true beginnings. An actual beginning has no relationship to that which it began, it is severed from the process that follows it. Actual beginnings obey a logic of instants, of aggregates, like the scholar aforementioned. A true beginning is "one that does not always begin again but persists. A true beginning is that which is the true ground of a steady progression, not of an alternating advancing and retreating" (SW VIII: 229).[29] A true beginning never ceases to be a beginning because it is not subjected to a succession of ordered moments in time but inscribes itself in a time based on simultaneity and reciprocity. More importantly, "to begin something is precisely not to actually be doing it yet. The beginning of anything must therefore involve the actualization of something that is not yet what is beginning."[30] The beginning, a paradigmatic figure of the past—of a 'chronological past,' to use Welchman and Norman's expression—extends itself over the whole process that it

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[26] Schelling, *Ideas*, 36.

[27] Joan Steigerwald, "Epistemologies of Rupture: The Problem of Nature in Schelling's Philosophy," *Studies in Romanticism* 41, no. 4 (2002): 571.

[28] Schelling, *Ages*, 51.

[29] Schelling, *Ages*, 20.

[30] Alistair Welchman and Judith Norman, "Creating the Past: Schelling's *Ages of the World*," *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 4, no. 1 (March 2010): 31.

starts without ever becoming what it started. Contrary to a vision of the beginning as that which exhausts itself in the instant of its happening, like the exhaustion of the cause in the effect in a mechanical framework, the true beginning hovers over the present that apparently moves away from it. The beginning might be an instant, the exact instant that signals the event of the coming of time, the point from which the line extends and grows indefinitely, but it is an instant that lasts eternally. This characterization of the beginning rejects the idea "that the past is a past present—something that used to be a 'now' but no longer is. For Schelling, the past was never a present or a 'now,' it has always been the past, it is always already past."[31] Since the beginning is no longer determined and fixed in the past, it is concealed within everything that is, nay, it retreats into everything that is.

Time is no longer an excluding relationship between before and after, but "a joint and intertwined continuing" (SW VIII: 253),[32] where the beginning becomes the lowest part of it. If we consider the beginning of nature—of a visible and expressed nature—it becomes clear that the beginning cannot be discerned from what nature has become. The past of nature is no longer distinguishable from nature itself; it has contracted within nature, but there is no way of uncovering it or bringing it to light. In fact, Schelling is emphatic about how nature, left to itself, is always what retracts, what takes everything into negativity. Here lies the answer to the question that opened this section: How is it that life, activity, freedom are the ground of nature, the world of things? Because without life, activity, and freedom nature would never become visible or actual. But, at the same time, nature is what freedom has to overcome—it is the *Ungrund* of the *Freedom Essay*.[33] The *Ages* offers a similar way of expressing the peculiar place and role of nature: "Nature is an abyss of the past. This is what is oldest in nature, the deepest of what remains if everything accidental and everything that has become is removed" (SW VIII: 243).[34] Taking a look into the depths of nature, even into its deep time, will not reveal anything determinable about its past; rather, it is a bottomless pit grounded by the indeterminacy of the past, by what the past is always yet to come: "Nature is eternal yet still commencing and it retains the nature of the initializing" (SW VIII: 249).[35]

The kind of time that I have been talking about is capable of making sense of freedom because it does not leave the past behind, even though it is a time at work within nature. Kant's great divide is unmade in Schelling's treatment: time is no longer relevant for distinguishing nature from freedom. The separation, moreover, relied as well on the split made between the phenomenal and the noumenal components of man. This could also mean, then, that the distinction between phenomena and

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[31] Norman and Welchman, "Creating the past," 37. For this same reason, they also argue that the *Ages* "is a narrative of the creation of time." As attractive as this idea is, it goes well beyond the scope of the present text.

[32] Schelling, *Ages*, 37.

[33] See Joan Steigerwald, "Ground and Grounding: The Nature of Things in Schelling's Philosophy," *Symposium* 19, no. 1 (2015): 176–197.

[34] Schelling, *Ages*, 31.

[35] Schelling, *Ages*, 35.

noumena is not tenable following the features of Kantian critique, which could, in turn, mean that they conflate. Instead of rushing into this sort of conclusion, allow me to slow down the argument. After all, Schelling's proposal is not a flattening or homogenization of everything that is, of the material and the ideal. Although there is a time that works for both nature and freedom, that does not mean that nature and freedom are the same; neither are phenomena and noumena the same thing just because freedom is compatible with time. They are different expressions of a common tension. With this in mind, I will continue my examination with the in-itself and what it could mean to bring its positive concept into nature.

The Concept of the In-Itself and the History of Nature

Schelling identifies the positive concept of the in-itself with Kant's free man as a thing-in-itself, as it was developed in the second *Critique*. It seems to be positive because it contains the essence of what it is to be human—to be free. In other words, freedom means to be in the constant state of self-realization, and that is the distinctive mark of the human condition. For it seems not to convey anything about the essence of things, the theoretical thing-in-itself remains a merely negative account in contrast with the positive determination of the practical. The success of Kant's critical approach, nonetheless, depends upon representations of objects not conforming "to these things as they are in themselves but rather that these objects as appearances conform to our way of representing" (B XX).[36] The theoretical in-itself thus concerns a major criteria for assessing the development of the critique. It is a concept that springs out of the transcendental aesthetics in the *Critique of Pure Reason,* where it refers to something that can only be thought, never experienced, a concept that Kant's transcendental system requires in order to fully develop the consequences for metaphysics of a sensibility restrained to pure receptivity, thus having no agency over what impinges upon it. At some point, Kant refers to the thing-in-itself as the "true correlate" of sensible representations, although it "is not and cannot be cognized through them, but is also never asked after in experience" (A30/B45).[37] Hence, the theoretical thing-in-itself allows the subject to think that there is something that affects her sensibility without determining what that could have been because once sensibility is affected all a subject can grasp is phenomenal. In a way, it makes possible thinking about something in isolation, a thing that is not related to, yet available for, a cognizing subject. Paradoxical and oxymoronic as everything related to the thing-in-itself,[38] however, the sense of essence conveyed by the concept can only be grasped

[36] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 112.
[37] Kant, *Pure Reason*, 162.
[38] Thing-in-itself, *Ding an sich*, is actually an oxymoronic expression. The word *Ding* is also in *bedingt,* conditioned*,* which means that to be conditioned is to be held as a thing. Grant, for example, has translated *unbedingte*, the unconditioned, as *unthinged* (Grant, *Philosophies*, 27). The thing-in-itself, thus, cannot be properly called a thing because it is not conditioned, it has no empirical relation to a cognizing subject.

as the negative and undetermined counterpart of that which appears in sensibility and is rightfully determined by the understanding. The theoretical thing-in-itself can never be determined as something in particular: there are no tables or chairs in themselves behind the phenomenal tables and chairs located in a particular room. It is a vague concept, incapable of being determined as something, unlike all the objects of experience, nor of determining some kind of relation, unlike the pure concepts of the understanding. On the contrary, the positive concept of the in-itself, following Kant's reflection, can be determined as something, a finite rational agent, a human being, involved in a determined relation with itself, that of self-realization, even though the deeds that the agent is going to perform throughout her life are not predetermined.

What happens, then, when Schelling takes the positive concept of the in-itself into nature, into the domain that was meant to hold only a negative concept of it? So far, this question has been partially answered: acknowledging the positive in-itself in nature uncovers its freedom and a kind of temporality that holds the dynamic between nature and freedom in constant motion. There is another question derived from Kant's exposition of the theoretical and practical in-itself: is it possible to bring the positive of the in-itself, its freedom, into the vagueness of the theoretical, of nature, without surrendering to the latter's negativity, to a mere epistemological relation of being unknown for the understanding? If for practical purposes alone, like in Kant, the positive concept of the in-itself determines the essence of one specific kind of entity, one that does not pertain to nature, then it would not be compatible with the vagueness proper of the theoretical in-itself. When Schelling claims that freedom is also the essence of the thing-in-itself of theoretical philosophy, he cannot ascribe freedom to an exclusive entity, he does not determine a particular, yet it is possible to get a glimpse of what it means for nature to be free: it means falling into the abyss of the past, discovering the positive at the heart of nature's vagueness. The intrusion of the positive in-itself in nature is accompanied by a metamorphosis of the way in which nature's matter is conceived. For matter to be vague, it needs to be dynamic in a manner that mere inertia cannot make sense of. Matter is inert, lifeless when its essence is reduced to extension, to occupying space. When matter is active, it is made up of forces and powers. Hence, matter is not only what moves in space, but also a form of sensibility, irritability, and reproduction.[39] And powers are inseparable from opposition:

> The abyss of forces down into which we gaze here opens up with the single question: in the first construction of our earth, what can have been the ground of the fact that no genesis of new individuals is possible upon it, otherwise than under the condition of opposite powers? (SW III: 323n)[40]

The conception of matter retrieved from the abyss renders the unknowability of the theoretical in-itself as a consequence of the vagueness of nature, of the impossibility

[39] See Violeta Aréchiga, "La teoría de la materia de la *Naturphilosophie*," *Metatheoria* 5, no. 1 (2014): 7–20.
[40] Schelling, *First Outline*, 230.

to determine nature as something when it is a perpetual beginning, always yet to come, instead of a failure of the understanding to determine an entity that is not given in sensible intuition. The vagueness of nature, the trace of its freedom is none other than its productivity: "The product of productivity is a *new productivity*" (SW III: 324).[41] If nature is to be rekindled, we shall live up to the task of a paradox: though everything empirical is natural, nature itself remains vague and indeterminate.

Schelling's variations on the in-itself and freedom highlight an important feature of his own philosophy. It has become a common place in Kantian scholarly controversies to depict the theoretical in-itself torn apart between two poles: a primarily idealist reading, like Henry Allison's deflationary account, where the thing-in-itself cannot be said to be a real existing entity,[42] and an overtly realist approach, like Rae Langton's epistemological humility, where the thing-in-itself exists and is what causes phenomena, yet it keeps certain intrinsic properties away from any cognitive relationship.[43] Schelling's in-itself, on the contrary, intertwines the ideal and the real in nature thanks to a passage through freedom. The vagueness of nature expresses the ideal in the real that is continuously becoming in productivity. Following Iain Grant, the conditions for the genesis of an object always exceed the object itself, hence what grounds the genesis of a mountain is not exhausted in the mountain, but it continues to be at work in things as disparate from it as fever-dreams.[44] The sense of disparity brings forward, once again, the free activity of nature. In the case of human freedom, disparate actions can be interwoven in history,[45] thus, in a narration, which leads us to another question: is there a history of nature?

Schelling's most direct and vivid exposition of the relation between nature and history appears in an early text entitled "Is a Philosophy of History Possible?" [*Ist eine Philosophie der Geschichte möglich?*]. From the outset, the influence of Kant's critical scruple is notorious—the question itself is framed in a transcendental tone. The division between the theoretical and the practical, moreover, is still superlative and there is an epistemological constraint cutting through the whole essay. However, it offers some telling reflections for the argument I am trying to advance. From the beginning, Schelling considers both nature and history as modes of organizing experience, hence there is a basic empirical aspect that cannot be dismissed. History is defined as knowledge of what has happened, of the past (as commonly understood). From here, he introduces a slight variation in the way he defines nature, departing

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[41] Schelling, *First Outline*, 231.

[42] Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 50-73.

[43] Rae Langton, *Kantian Humility: Our Ignorance of Things in Themselves* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[44] Iain Hamilton Grant, "Mining Conditions. A Response to Harman," in *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, ed. Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman (Melbourne: re.press, 2011), 41–46.

[45] Kant, alongside many other thinkers from the diverse Enlightenments of 18th century Europe, considered that only freedom could engender history. As a consequence, history is only possible when there is a free agent at work. Nature could be part of the scenery or, at best, a motivation, a trigger of some actions, like fighting over the control of a resource. There were, of course, voices of dissent, like Buffon in France or J. G. Herder in Germany.

from Kant: if, for the latter, nature is the sum total of phenomena, for Schelling it is the whole of what *happens*. Nature, thus, would qualify as the proper object of history (SW I: 466).[46] There is, nonetheless, one reason to be cautious about this feature of nature: occurrences that are observed repeatedly, in a regular or periodic fashion, are not part of history, because a rule for their regularity is presupposed—history is not subjected to an *a priori* calculation (SW I: 467).[47] This means, in turn, that anything mechanical in nature is not historical—mechanism is just the endless repetition of the same. The mechanism of nature, borrowing a term from Grant, is 'historyless,' "that is, there is only a cyclical repetition of events, with no 'has happened' that is not also necessarily a 'will happen.'"[48] Anything lying outside an *a priori* determination, one that depends on the cognizing subject, then, pertains to history. The epistemological constraint becomes relevant at this point: that an occurrence may be weighed as historical depends on our incapacity to contemplate it as a mechanism and grasp the laws that underlie its unfolding (SW I: 472).[49] For history concerns the infeasibility of an *a priori* determination*,* Schelling concludes that a philosophy of history, given that philosophy since Kant must be *a priori*, is impossible.

The issue at hand does not concern a philosophy of history, but the concepts of history and nature and their entanglement. Hence, his characterization of history is quite relevant for my argument, considering the many points of convergence and resonance. That history is concerned with what has happened is an idea that keeps appearing in the *Ages*, where Schelling characterizes the past as the known, the narrated. But it can only make a narration insofar as it is not subjected to a predetermination—the narration is a product of the free productivity of nature. This also means that nature is not only subjected to a mechanical determination that renders it inert and lifeless; rather, its activity and life denote a dynamic between the real and the ideal that expresses its freedom through the infinite and motley deviations from an ideal type that becomes actual—like in the case of organisms—hence a subject for history (SW I: 468-9).[50] The abyss of the past, of a past yet to come, shows that the positive concept of the in-itself, freedom, makes a history of nature possible. Taking the positive concept of the in-itself from a strictly practical dominion into that of the theoretical reveals the historical constitution of nature.

The past yet to come not only makes a history of nature possible; it also transforms the usual outlook of human history, disclosing the natural *Ungrund* of freedom in another form of history.

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[46] F. W. J. Schelling, "Sobre la pregunta de si es posible una filosofía de la experiencia y, en particular, una Filosofía de la Historia," in *Experiencia e historia. Escritos de juventud*, ed. and trans. José Luis Villacañas (Madrid: Tecnos, 1990), 149. He then adds that not all natural occurrences have a historical form because history does not record them as natural phenomena [*Naturerscheinungen*], but as natural episodes or sequels [*Naturerfolge*] that have had some impact on human life, e.g., an earthquake or the passing of a comet. [47] Schelling, "Sobre la pregunta," 149-150.

[48] Grant, *Philosophies*, 48.

[49] Schelling, "Sobre la pregunta," 153.

[50] Schelling, "Sobre la pregunta," 150-151.

The movement of the positive in-itself into nature means that freedom also possesses a degree of vagueness. In other words, the positive in-itself cannot continue to be determined as an essence peculiar to a rational finite agent, like man. The freedom of man, as Schelling argued in the *Freedom Essay*, has its own singularities, but they do not exhaust the whole of freedom, as I have tried to show. There is a general form of freedom: "If freedom really is the positive concept of the in-itself, the investigation concerning human freedom is thrown back again into the general" (SW VII: 352).[51] A question remains: were the general form of freedom to express itself in humanity, *what would it look like*? I think the Anthropocene might hint at it. The Anthropocene has become a concept that signals the intrusion of historical time into geological time, of the 'human' into the 'natural.' In a sense, it is a form of anthropocentrism gone wild: we, human beings, are responsible for a series of geological and climatic changes that signal the end of the Holocene, alongside a deep ecological crisis that leaves no part of this planet untouched, hence, we deserve to name this epoch after ourselves.[52] Yet, in another sense, it is a deeply non-anthropocentric concept, indeed it is "*the first truly anti-anthropocentric concept*,"[53] one that could actually transform the face of humanity: "The human being has become something much larger than the simple biological agent that he or she always has been. Humans now wield a geological force."[54] This is the main thesis that, according to Dipesh Chakrabarty, climate scientists are positing, and the phrasing is striking, especially the temporal marks, 'always has been' and 'now wield.' It seems to imply that there was a transformation in the history of humanity that took it from a biological entity to a geological force. But then again, this linear narrative of what has been and now is poses other kind of problems. Whether we believe the Anthropocene to have started ten millennia ago with agriculture, two centuries ago with the steam engine, 70 years ago with atomic energy, or the last time you used a plastic bag, its beginning is quite elusive and keeps troubling discourses that try to fix it to a determinate point in the past that has passed. The effects of the Anthropocene do not wear down those forces that have come all along from that past.

Alongside the indeterminacy of the beginning, what makes the Anthropocene so compelling for this discussion is that it "has doubled the figure of the human—you have to think of the two figures of the human simultaneously: the human-human and the nonhuman-human."[55] This assertion runs parallel to the fissure between the positive and negative concepts of the in-itself. The Anthropocene, then, points to the

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[51] Schelling, *Human Freedom*, 22.

[52] For a critical and historical approach to this kind of discourse, see Libby Robin and Will Steffen, "History for the Anthropocene," *History Compass* 5, no. 5 (2007): 1694–1719.

[53] Timothy Morton, "How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Term Anthropocene," *The Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* 1, no. 2 (2014): 262.

[54] Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 2 (2009): 206).

[55] Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of Climate Change," *New Literary History* 43, no. 1 (2012): 11.

vagueness that is also part of humanity: "A geophysical force—for that is what in part we are in our collective existence—is neither subject nor an object."[56] It comes from a place or moment previous to the rupture between subject and object, previous to consciousness: "Its generation had unintentional or unconscious dimensions."[57] The intrusion of history, of human history, into nature, as well as the other way around, the intrusion of the geological into human agency, entails a reconceptualization of humanity as a geological force, which in turn means that humanity has to give up the conscious control of all of its actions. The idea that the ecological crisis, a prominent feature of the Anthropocene, could be solved with a few technofixes and public policies based on the will of individuals, as the Ecomodernist movement argues,[58] is called into question and troubled. Because of the doubling of the human, the cause and the effects are no longer part of the same register or plane. Hence, if we truly believe that we have been the cause of climate change, it does not imply that its effects are still under our control.

The sense of imminent ecological crisis and emergency that features in any discussion concerning the Anthropocene, throws us into a state of anxiety and uneasiness about what the future holds, what is yet to come. However, that the past is something yet to come, as I have tried to argue here, does not amount to conceiving the past as equivalent to a form of radical futurity. The latter constitutes the temporal structure of apocalyptic discourses, of a passivity surrendered to waiting. In the words of Claire Colebrook, this is not quite the case of the Anthropocene:

> The sense of the Anthropocene era, the sense of man as a bounded species within time, is given not in the possibility of a sudden end that would bring to light—as nuclear annihilation might do—'our' fragile dependence on an archive and technological formation that might be wiped off the face of the earth, but more in a slow unwitnessed and ugly decay (a whimper, not a bang). Unlike the nuclear age, we do *not* foresee our own end.[59]

The sense of the yet to come, a paradigmatic figure of the future, of the utterly unknown and unexpected, is embroiled when it is proclaimed of the past.[60] As Schelling so decisively repeats throughout the three versions of the *Ages*, the past is known and it is therefore narrated. Instead of making past and future the same, of closing the apparent circle of time in a misleading representation of repetition, the

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[56] Chakrabarty, "Postcolonial Studies," 13.

[57] Morton, "How I Learned," 260.

[58] See John Asafu-Adjaye et al., "An Ecomodernist Manifesto" (www.ecomodernism.org, 2015).

[59] Claire Colebrook, "Not Symbiosis, Not Now: Why Anthropogenic Change Is Not Really Human," *Oxford Literary Review* 34, no. 2 (2012): 206.

[60] Jason Wirth, "Translator's Introduction," in *The Ages of the World*, by F. W. J. Schelling (Albany: SUNY, 2000), xvii, uses a similar expression, *still to come*, with respect to the future: "The intimation, or inkling, *die Ahnung*, is the lost and irrecoverable ground of the past suggesting itself as what is still to come, but in such a way that its coming does not preserve the present but rather overturns it." This relation between past and future, between the fragment and the totality from which it has been severed, even if that totality was never actual, is part of what I am trying to convey with the past yet to come.

past that is yet to come transforms what it means to be known, what it is to narrate. The known and narration remain open and indeterminate to the different modes in which they could be presented and performed. Hence, to know is not equivalent to determination (a feature of Kant's criticism), and to narrate is an act incapable of exhausting the past, of attaining a single, total story. The past yet to come, far from being akin to radical futurity affirms its kinship with the untimely—the creative potency of the past. Following this course of inquiry, Elizabeth Grosz proposes, in close alliance with Friedrich Nietzsche,[61] that the untimely is what disrupts our expectations, "that which is strong enough, active enough, to withstand the drive of the present to similarity, resemblance, or recognition, for the untimely brings with it the divergence that portends the future."[62] With a resembling tone, Maria Puig de la Bellacasa uses the untimely to "invoke innovative ways of knowing that will seem inevitably backwards or pre-technoscientific to the progressive spirit [of the present]."[63] The untimely—a recurring past, a past that comes again, the repetition of the known, but differently and with new and creative effects.

The Anthropocene has thus operated a double disarticulation: on the side of freedom, it sets in a vague and uncertain motion an unconscious flow of human geological forces; on the side of nature, it banishes the cherished symmetry between cause and effect, the exhaustion of the former in the latter, setting causality into a vague and wandering state. This double disarticulation forces us to try "to listen to that which insists, obscurely."[64] That obscurity is very reminiscent of the Schellingian abyss of the past, of a free and unconscious productivity that cannot be said to have a determinate end. In this indeterminacy, the Anthropocene also takes the form of what Isabelle Stengers has named the intrusion of Gaia: "Gaia, she who intrudes, asks nothing of us, not even a response to the question she imposes."[65] Gaia imposes a question, yet she asks for no response—it cannot be determined nor expressed.[66] Gaia might as well be the past yet to come, the past in which a beginning remains always a beginning, the past that was never present, but instead points to the untimely, not so

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[61] Judith Norman, "Schelling and Nietzsche: Willing and Time," in *The New Schelling*, ed. Judith Norman and Alistair Welchman (London: Continuum, 2004), 90–105, has argued that Schelling and Nietzsche used a notion of will capable of creating a past that avows an interest for the present. However, there is a fundamental difference between the two: while Schelling tries to bury the past in the inaccessible, Nietzsche wills that the past returns. For Norman, this means that Schelling emphasizes the inaccessibility of the past, while Nietzsche postpones the project into an unknown future. I do not share her idea that these two approaches are at odds. After all, Schelling affirms that the whole is in the fragment—that is the past yet to come.

[62] Elizabeth Grosz, *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2004), 11.

[63] María Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 212.

[64] Isabelle Stengers, *In Catastrophic Times: Resisting the Coming Barbarism*, trans. Andrew Goffey (Open Humanities Press, 2015), 19.

[65] Stengers, *Catastrophic Times*, 46.

[66] This indeterminacy leaves no place neither for a gloomy pessimistic future nor for an enchanting optimistic one. An example of the latter, in relation to Schelling, is found in Bruce Matthews, "Schelling in the Anthropocene: A New Mythology of Nature," *Symposium* 19 (2015): 94–105.

as to elicit a firm and definitive response but "so as to question the protagonists of a situation from the point of view of what they may become capable of, the manner in which they are likely to respond to this situation."[67] Response is no longer a matter of solving a problem, getting rid of it; it is a question of responsibility. Gaia, the Anthropocene, the past yet to come, opens a crack in the continuous tissue of time, a hiatus for creativity, a rift for the political[68] that could be approached through the mismatch between general freedom, the productivity of nature, and human freedom, the capacity for good and evil, a gap that raises anew the question of responsibility. Let that be a subject for another intervention, a task for insisting on the rekindling of nature.

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[67] Stengers, *Catastrophic Times*, 34.

[68] See Mario Rufer, "La temporalidad como política: nación, formas de pasado y perspectivas poscoloniales," *Memoria y sociedad* 14, no. 28 (2010): 11–31, as well as Chakrabarty's postcolonial commitments.

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Schelling's Political Naturalism: A Case Study on the State in the Würzburg Identity Philosophy

Johannes-Georg Schülein

Introduction

Schelling is often seen as an apolitical thinker. However, although he never developed a full-fledged political theory like Kant, Fichte, or Hegel, he did reflect on politics, too.[1] Considerations on the political were not merely a side-project for him. He generally built them into a larger philosophical endeavor, for example, in the *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), the *Stuttgart Seminars* (1810), and the late *Presentation of the Purely Rational Philosophy* (1847-52). Recently, a growing number of studies have

[1] Habermas, for example, referred to Schelling as a non-political thinker. Jürgen Habermas, "Dialektischer Idealismus im Übergang zum Materialismus—Geschichtsphilosophische Folgerungen aus Schellings Idee einer Contraction Gottes," in *Theorie und Praxis. Sozialphilosophische Studien* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1963), 172. Sandkühler spoke of Schelling's "anti-politics" (*Anti-Politik*) (Hans-Jörg Sandkühler, "F.W.J. Schelling—Philosophie als Seinsgeschichte und Anti-Politik," in *Die praktische Philosophie Schellings und die gegenwärtige Rechtsphilosophie*, ed. Hans-Martin Pawlowski, Stefan Smid, and Rainer Specht [Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Fromman-Holzboog, 1989]), but later modified this view. See Hans-Jörg Sandkühler, "Die Geschichte, das Recht und der Staat als 'zweite Natur.' Zu Schellings politischer Philosophie," in *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 55, no. 2 (2001): 167-95. On Schelling's political thought, see also the classical studies by Claudo Cesa, *La filosofia politica di Schelling* (Bari: Laterza, 1969) and Wilhelm G. Jacobs, "Schellings politische Philosophie," in *Schelling: Seine Bedeutung für eine Philosophie der Natur und der Geschichte*, ed. Ludwig Hasler (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1981). See also Franck Fischbach, "La pensée politique de Schelling," in *Politique et spéculation dans l'idéalisme allemande. Les Etudes philosophiques* 1 (2001): 31-48.

appeared that focus on the traditionally underestimated political aspects of Schelling's thought.[2] With this essay, I want to contribute to this new appreciation of the political in Schelling. I propose a critical reading of the conception of the state that he developed in the Würzburg period around 1804.[3] We can reconstruct his position from the posthumously published *System of the Whole of Philosophy and the Philosophy of Nature in Particular* (1804 [SW VI: 131-576]) and the newly edited 1804 lecture notes.[4]

What Schelling says about the state in this period cannot be dismissed as merely an opinion. It is important to see that his view of the political sphere is perfectly coherent with the metaphysical position he defends. As skimpy as his thoughts about the political may initially appear, they must be taken seriously as a set of genuine philosophical claims that follow from the ontology he puts forward. Schelling's ontology is, around this time, essentially a kind of metaphysical monism. Based on his monism, he constructs a philosophy of the natural and the spiritual world. The latter culminates in the outline of an ideal state.

In the following, I argue in a first step that Schelling's monism entails a kind of *metaphysical naturalism*. By 'metaphysical naturalism' I mean the philosophical conviction that only natural objects exist.[5] In Schelling's case, these objects are not empirical objects or objects of science but parts of a singular substance, which functions as the ontological basis of all reality. Inspired by Spinoza, Schelling presents this substance as *deus sive natura*, god or nature.[6] I argue in a second step that Schelling's metaphysical naturalism is intrinsically also a *political* naturalism. His view of the state reveals how his monistic ontology thoroughly determines the human life-world. The theoretical moves that Schelling makes on the ontological level show real-world consequences as they come to bear in the political sphere. The political is, on Schelling's account, nothing that actual human beings would create, shape, or essentially control. Rather, it is completely predetermined on the ontological level.[7] Schelling's state thus resembles a given natural order that cannot be changed. Because

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[2] See Saitya Brata Das, *The Political Theology of Schelling* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016); Ryan Scheerlinck, *Philosophie und Religion—Schellings politische Philosophie* (Freiburg: Alber, 2017). See also the volume edited by Sebastian Schwenzfeuer and Lore Hühn, due to appear in 2022: *"Wir müssen also auch über den Staat hinaus!"—Schellings Philosophie des Politischen* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, forthcoming).

[3] This essay contains some material published in a German text in Johannes-Georg Schülein, "Ontologie und Staat bei Schelling und Spinoza," in *"Wir müssen also auch über den Staat hinaus!"—Schellings Philosophie des Politischen*, ed. Lore Hühn and Sebastian Schwenzfeuer (Baden-Baden: Nomos, forthcoming).

[4] This material appears in Ryan Scheerlinck, "Die Konstruktion des Staates und die Unterscheidung von Freien und Nicht-Freien. Ein Auszug aus der Pauls-Nachschrift Schelling über Ideal-Philosophie (1804)," *Schelling-Studien* 4 (2016): 207-227.

[5] On this understanding of metaphysical naturalism, see Geert Keil, "Naturalismus und menschliche Natur," in *Der Ort der Vernunft in einer natürlichen Welt: logische und anthropologische Ortsbestimmungen*, ed. Wolf J. Cramm and Geert Keil (Velbrück: Weilerswist, 2008): 196-7.

[6] See Baruch de Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. George Eliot, ed. Clare Carlisle (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 4ax4d. Schelling does not use the phrase explicitly. However, he speaks of the absolute which grounds his system as God and the nature of the universe.

[7] Contrary to my reading, Sandkühler has argued that Schelling comes up with pragmatic and functional definitions of the state. Sandkühler, "Die Geschichte," 176.

the structure of the state is completely predetermined in Schelling's ontology, this ontology is already in itself political.

As it establishes a fixed social order, Schelling's political naturalism proves to be deeply problematic. I aim to show that at the core of the problem lies the ontological status of individual entities in general and that of individual human beings in particular. Schelling rigorously denies that individuals truly exist. Consequently, they can hardly claim any authority in the political sphere. How extreme Schelling's view of individuals actually is can be seen if we compare it to Spinoza's political theory. Spinoza's monism is an important inspiration for Schelling. In contrast to Schelling, however, Spinoza does not deny that individuals truly exist. Hence, he is prepared to affirm a democratic social order in which individuals shape their political life-worlds on the basis of their own interests. In this comparison, Schelling's political naturalism does not only fall short of Spinoza's political philosophy. It also falls short of his own earlier conception of the state presented in the *System of Transcendental Idealism* as well. And it demands a reconsideration of the relation between the individual and the state that Schelling eventually undertook in the wake of the *Freedom Essay* (1809) and the *Stuttgart Seminars* (1810).

Schelling's Metaphysical Naturalism

The 1804 *System of the Whole of Philosophy* presents a version of Schelling's so-called identity philosophy. At this stage in the development of his thought, Schelling assumes that an absolute identity constitutes the inner substance of all reality. He describes this identity in the 1804 *System* as a unity of a subjective and an objective pole. The subjective pole stands for an active *affirming* side, the objective pole for a passive side of *being affirmed* (SW VI: 145). The absolute identity of these two poles constitutes the ontological core that Schelling's system posits as the ultimate ground of everything that is. With this, he defends a kind of monism which bears many resemblances to Spinoza's ontology. The absolute identity is said to exist necessarily as one (SW VI: 157; cf. in Spinoza, *Ethics,* 1p14), eternal (SW VI: 158; cf. Spinoza, *Ethics,* 1p19), infinite (SW VI: 160; cf. Spinoza, *Ethics,* 1p13) substance that does not create an independent world—rather, the world is identical with this very substance (SW VI: 170; cf. Spinoza, *Ethics,* 1p18). Schelling condenses his fundamental position in probably the shortest possible form when he states: *everything is—in as much as it truly is—God as the absolute identity or substance* ("*Alles, was ist, ist, insofern es ist, Gott*"; SW VI: 157).[8]

The basic ontological configuration of Schelling's theory is the topic of the *System*'s first part. Everything that exists expresses this ontological configuration. Whatever exists embodies the bipolarity of subjectivity and objectivity to a different degree. Schelling's theory of what exists comes in two parts. One lays out a philosophy of nature in the narrower sense. The other contains a philosophy of spirit. In support of the claim that Schelling defends a metaphysical naturalism, it is decisive to see that

[8] All translations of *The System of the Whole of Philosophy* are mine.

he uses the word "nature" not only in the narrower, but also in a broader sense. Nature in the narrower sense refers to the sphere that we commonly associate with the word "nature." Schelling presents his insights into nature in this sense from a theory of matter, extending into a theory of plant and animal life, culminating in a theory of the human organism. But Schelling also uses the word "nature" when he refers to the absolute identity as the ground of reality. As nature in this second sense refers to the very ontological structure of the world, Schelling says that his whole philosophy is, properly speaking, a philosophy of nature in the sense of a theory of the universe: "*Naturphilosophie: a theory of the universe* [*Naturphilosophie—Lehre vom All*]" (SW VI: 494). Schelling's identification of the philosophy of nature with a theory of the universe does not of course mean that his philosophy would be identical with the philosophy of nature in the narrower sense. Philosophy, for Schelling, is obviously more than a theory of matter, of organisms, physics, and biology. He is not a naturalist in a Quinean sense. Rather, Schelling is a metaphysical naturalist in the sense that he uses the word "nature" for the eternal substance which is the ontological structure of the whole of reality. From Spinoza, he borrows the terms "natura naturans" and "natura naturata" (SW VI: 199; cf. Spinoza, *Ethics,* 1p29s). *Natura naturans* stands for the absolute unity as the substance of all reality. *Natura naturata* stands for the actualization of this substance in the sphere of nature in the narrower sense and in the sphere of spirit alike. Schelling equally reduces nature in the narrower sense and the sphere of spirit to this metaphysical structure. As this metaphysical structure is an absolute substance, I propose to call it absolute nature in opposition to nature in the narrower sense. God as absolute nature defines the core of Schelling's metaphysical naturalism. Schelling's metaphysical naturalism is reductive in the sense that all phenomena he sets out to explain reproduce the basic structure of absolute nature. The state as well reproduces this metaphysical structure.

From absolute nature as the starting point, Schelling's ontology sets out to explain the totality of what exists. His theory can be reconstructed as operating on three levels. On the first and fundamental level, Schelling introduces God as absolute nature and, as such, the eternal substance of all reality. On the second level, he aims to explain everything that *exists in general*, e.g., genera and species, natural kinds, generic forms of spirit. What exits in general, according to Schelling, resembles, in fact, Platonic ideas. On the third level he thematizes the existence of individual entities that *manifest* what exists in general.

Schelling takes the step from the first to the second level by way of a complex theory of identity and difference. His first-level claim that everything that truly exists is God implies that God is identical with true being in its entirety. True being is thus an absolute identity. To explain what exists in general requires Schelling to make a distinction between the absolute unity of true being and the many distinct generic things that exist. Schelling's theory faces the problem that, if true being is an absolute identity, it is hard to see how anything can exist and be different from this unity. He explicitly excludes the possibility that there are differences within God's absolute nature, especially no essential or qualitative differences (SW VI: 179). God remains a pure unity without any differences. The only differences which Schelling accepts are

differences of quantity (SW VI: 179-81). They consist in a predominance of one of the two poles over the other, of subjectivity over objectivity, of the affirming pole over the one that is affirmed—or vice versa.

To account for the many distinct things that exist, Schelling proposes a theory of quantitative differentiation. According to this theory, matter, for example, is characterized by a predominance of objectivity over subjectivity. Light, in contrast, manifests a prevalence of subjectivity over objectivity. The leading idea in Schelling's account is that each thing that exists can be explained as a manifestation of a certain proportion of subjectivity and objectivity. In this picture, nothing is without subjectivity. Everything has for Schelling a spiritual, ideal side. But nothing exists in an entirely spiritual, ideal sphere either. Everything has an objective, material side too.

Human beings occupy a special place in the quantitatively differentiated totality of what exists in general. In humans, the quantitative difference between subjectivity and objectivity appears, on Schelling's account, balanced and in harmony. His view of the human is heavily influenced by Johann Winckelmann's aesthetic descriptions of classic Greek sculptures that display a perfectly ideal balance between their inner spiritual side and the material objectivity of their body.[9] Schelling borrows the idea of aesthetic harmony to describe the human being as a real-world manifestation of the very identity of subjectivity and objectivity that exists in God as absolute nature (SW VI: 485-92).

From a structural point of view, it is clear that quantitative differences and their harmonization in the human cannot exist in God if God is an absolute identity of subjectivity and objectivity. If there are quantitative differences, they can only exist outside of God. Against the backdrop of this idea, Schelling states: "*That which is posited as quantitative difference is itself, with regard to the universe, merely posited as (relatively) negated—as non-essences* [*Nicht-Wesen*]" (SW VI: 180).[10] Schelling says here that quantitative differences have to be regarded as non-essential beings (*Nicht-Wesen*). They fall outside of God and lay outside of being in its full and true sense. Their ontological dignity is, as it were, lower than God's own. However, they can be, such as the human being, near to perfect manifestations or images of God's absolute nature.

This conception of non-essential beings as quantitative differences lays the ground for Schelling's theory of individual entities on the third level. Schelling maintains that every individual is emphatically

> … in the universe, and it is not. It *is*, in as much as it is permeated by the infinite notion of God and the universe, it *is not*, in as much as it is something

[9] Schelling mentions Winckelmann in SW VI: 490. A source for Schelling's view of the human organism can be found in Winckelmann's *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* (Vienna: Phaidon, 1934), 149.

[10] "*Was als quantitative Differenz gesetzt ist, ist in Bezug auf das All selbst nur als* (relativ) *negirt—als Nicht-Wesen—gesetzt.* " SW VI: 180.

> for itself.… *Precisely the being and relative non-being of the particular in the universe is the root of all finitude* (SW VI: 181).[11]

Individuals are thus defined by two aspects. One aspect is their being *in the All*. What Schelling calls *the All* here corresponds to the universe of what exists in general. Every existing individual entity belongs to this universe in as much as it represents a generic determination. Schelling can say that the generic is permeated by the eternal concept of God (*durchdrungen vom unendlichen Begriff Gottes*) in as much as it is characterized by a certain proportion of subjectivity and objectivity—and subjectivity and objectivity are God's own properties. *Being in the universe* thus means having and manifesting a generic essence. This constitutes the *whatness* of things.

The other aspect of an individual's existence is its individuality in the strong sense. Every individual does not only represent generic determinations. It is also a concrete, singular being. Aristotle referred to this dimension as the first substance of a thing that cannot be grasped in concepts. We can only point to it. It constitutes its *thatness*.[12] It is important to see that thatness, for Schelling, is not only something that cannot be conceptually determined. Moreover, he does not refer to it as something like a substance. In a more Platonic spirit, he describes it as *non-being* (*Nichtseyn*; SW VI: 181).[13] To an even greater extent than that which exists in general, individuality, in the strong sense, thus falls outside the sphere of true being. It does not possess a proper existence.

Schelling's three-level ontology thus holds that (a) God as the one substance of all reality is true being; (b) the quantitatively differentiated universe of generic existence falls outside the realm of true being; (c) individual entities exist only insofar as they instantiate a generic whatness, they do not exist at all insofar as they are concrete singular things.

It is obvious that this theory is inspired to a considerable degree not only by Spinoza but also to a considerable degree by neo-Platonism.[14] On the second and the third levels, there is less being than on the first. This renders the ontological status of individual beings precarious in two ways. First, individual things are said to exist in as much as they instantiate a generic essence. But generic essences fall already outside the sphere of true being. Thus, individuals instantiate a content which does not exist to the fullest possible degree. Secondly, what is more, the thatness of an individual entity does not consist in anything positive. As Schelling describes it as non-being, it consists in nothing but a privation of the universe of generic existence as well as ultimately the absolute unity of true being. Concrete individual existence is thus highly precarious.

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[11] "… Im All, und es ist auch nicht. Es *ist*, inwiefern es durchdrungen ist vom unendlichen Begriff Gottes und des Alls, es *ist nicht*, inwiefern es etwas für sich ist.… *Eben jenes Seyn und relative Nichtseyn des Besonderen im All ist der Keim der gesammten Endlichkeit.*" SW VI: 181.

[12] See Aristotle's *Categories* 5, 2a13 *passim*.

[13] Schelling explicitly uses the Platonic "*me on*" (non-being) to characterize the sensible world in SW VI: 229.

[14] See on this Jens Halfwassen, *Auf der Spur des Einen* (Tübingen: Moher-Siebeck, 2015).

According to this picture, the being of a concrete plant, for example, consists in *nothing but* the fact that it does not fully represent the generic essence it instantiates—and "nothing else" (SW VI: 184). Schelling draws the equivalent consequence explicitly for human beings, too: "The *individual* human being, i.e., is an individual human being not by virtue of the idea but because he is not the idea, the negation of the idea" (SW VI: 191).[15] An individual human being is *this* specific individual human being only insofar as she or he is a privation of the generic determination of the idea of "being human" she or he instantiates. In this perspective, there is hardly anything positive in the thatness of a concrete individual. The negativity of thatness in Schelling resembles the kind of negativity that Plato sees in the sensible world.

Moreover, Schelling connects this ontological precarity with a practical issue. He is convinced that individual freedom is an illusion: "The kind of freedom that an individual assigns to himself is no freedom but merely the tendency to be absolutely in himself, a tendency which is in itself null and void" (SW VI: 551).[16] Individual freedom is an illusion because it is nothing but a futile, individualistic striving for selfhood. Schelling points out that the unfreedom of individuals is ultimately grounded in the precarious ontological status of finite existence:

> The ground of finitude lies, according to our view, exclusively in the **not**-being-in-God of the things as particulars. Since they are essentially or in principle in God, their not-being-in-God can be described as a *fall—a defectio*—from God or the universe (SW VI: 552).[17]

The negative character of individual entities that Schelling introduces in his ontology thus bears directly on their practical existence. An individual human being is unfree because it is not one with God—and God, as a necessarily existing unity, is not only defined as true being but also as true freedom. Again, Spinoza is in the background: God exists, as Spinoza already said, as a *causa sui* that "exists solely by the necessity of its nature."[18] Spinoza distinguishes God's absolute form of existence from the finite existence of entities that "are determined by another to exist."[19] Schelling compares the ontological difference between God as true being and true freedom on the one hand, and the thatness of individual entities that do not exist with necessity on the other, with the Biblical *fall* of humanity (*ein Abfall—eine defectio*). It is thus clear that Schelling's ontology does not simply operate with neutral descriptive concepts. As it

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[15] "Der *einzelne* Mensch z.B. ist einzelner Mensch nicht kraft der Idee, sondern vielmehr *weil er nicht die Idee*, Negation der Idee ist." SW VI: 191.

[16] "Die Freiheit, welche sich das Individuum als Individuum zuschreibt, ist keine Freiheit, sondern bloße Tendenz absolut in sich selbst zu seyn, die an sich selbst nichtig ist." SW VI: 551.

[17] "Der Grund der Endlichkeit liegt nach unserer Ansicht einzig in einem **nicht**-in-Gott-Seyn der Dinge als besonderer, welches, da sie doch ihrem *Wesen* nach oder an sich in Gott sind, auch als ein *Abfall*—eine *defectio*—von Gott oder dem All ausgedrückt werden kann." SW VI: 552.

[18] Spinoza, *Ethics,* 1d7.

[19] Spinoza, *Ethics,* 1d7.

lays the ground for real-world phenomena, it reveals a normative character as well. Structural decisions that Schelling makes on the level of his ontology eventually come to bear in his view of the state, too. In the political sphere, the ontological status of individual beings remains precarious. Furthermore, Schelling's rejection of individual freedom disqualifies individual freedom as a potential source of political legitimation. Instead, Schelling designs the political sphere completely on the basis of his ontology.

The fact that Schelling ascribes an ontologically weak status to individual entities and rejects individual freedom may seem to be in line with Spinoza's ontology. In truth, however, there are important differences between Spinoza and Schelling concerning both the ontological status of individual entities and the critique of individual freedom.

It is well known that Spinoza's monism—like Schelling's—rejects the idea that individual entities existed independently of the one substance of all reality. But admittedly—in contrast to Schelling—Spinoza still secures a positive ontological status for individual entities. He does not determine individual things only negatively in relation to the absolute substance. In 1p15 of the *Ethics,* Spinoza postulates that all things exist never independently of God but only *in God.* It is remarkable that in 1804 Schelling does not use the preposition "in" when he defines God as true being. His claim is not that everything is *in* God.[20] His claim is that everything that truly exists *is God.* Hence, only God truly exists for him, and nothing exists in God that could be differentiated. On the contrary, the fact that individual entities exist for Spinoza immanently in God implies that they never fall outside of God. Precisely because there is only God-immanent existence, there is no negative sphere in Spinoza's conception that would simply lie outside of the one substance of all reality. When Spinoza states in the corollary to 1p25 of the *Ethics* that individual things are nothing but finite modifications of God that express God's attributes, he underlines that individual entities actualize God's being.[21] As expressive modifications *of* God they remain *in* God.

In the third part of the *Ethics,* Spinoza goes a step further and attributes a striving for self-preservation—a *conatus*—to all entities. The *conatus* defines the actual essence of an individual thing.[22] Spinoza does not only *describe* the *conatus.* He holds the view that reason is not opposed to the striving for individual self-preservation. According to him, everything *should* in fact strive for the preservation of its existence.[23] Succeeding in self-preservation is even the source of joy.[24]When Spinoza rejects individual freedom, he turns against the idea that individuals are capable of independently defining purposes for themselves that could function as reasons for their actions .[25] He holds that individuals are in truth part of a great chain of causes

[20] Spinoza, *Ethics,* 1p15. It should be noted that Schelling uses exactly this expression, all things exist in God, five years later in the *Freedom Essay*. See Schelling (SW VII: 347; 349; 355).—Ed.
[21] Spinoza, *Ethics,* 1p25.
[22] Spinoza, *Ethics*, 3p7.
[23] Spinoza, *Ethics*, 4p18s.
[24] Spinoza, *Ethics,* 4p18s.
[25] Spinoza, *Ethics*, 1app.

in which everything is eternally predetermined and in this sense "determined by another to exist and act according to a certain and definite law."[26] Yet, Spinoza does still defend the view that individual human beings can nevertheless achieve a kind of freedom. This kind of freedom consists in extending *knowledge* as far as possible. Spinoza's idea is that if I know what truly benefits my striving for self-preservation, I reduce the ways in which I passively depend on heteronomous affects. The more I know, the greater my spiritual autonomy.[27] It is a sharp contrast to Schelling insofar as he does not affirm a *conatus*. He rather speaks of the "*mere impotency*," the "*bloße Ohnmacht,*" of individual things (SW VI: 197). If there is a sublime form of *conatus* to be found in Schelling, it consists in an ultimately sinful striving to be oneself outside of God. As we shall see, the difference between Schelling's and Spinoza's views of the ontological status of individual entities fundamentally predisposes the space they are prepared to cede to the individual in the political sphere.

Schelling's Political Metaphysical Naturalism

The *System of the Whole of Philosophy* was published posthumously on the basis of texts, edited by his son Karl, that stem from Schelling's lectures at the University of Würzburg. If we infer Schelling's position from the *System,* we see that he turns to the state only on the final two pages of the book. He defines the state as an objective unity in which science, religion, and art are one (SW VI: 575). The state—like the human being at the top of the natural world—is presented as a close-to-prefect manifestation of the one eternal substance of all reality. Schelling presents the state furthermore as an objective institutional framework that enables human subjects to lead a philosophical life in which they may enjoy and participate "in everything good and beautiful in a public life" (SW VI: 575).[28] He makes it clear that he does not want to describe an actual existing state but rather—like Plato—an *ideal state*.

On the one hand, Schelling's ideal state occupies a prominent position at the climax of the *System of the Whole of Philosophy*. This speaks for its importance. On the other hand, however, the fact that Schelling devotes only two pages to it may indeed suggest that developing a detailed view of the political order was not of great importance to him. Yet, recently published notes by Johann Peter Pauls of Schelling's lectures in Würzburg prove that when he actually presented on the state, he dealt with it to a much larger extend than the *System of the Whole of Philosophy* indicates.[29] This newly found material is an illuminating supplement to the standard version of the *System*.

It is already evident in the established text of the *System of the Whole of Philosophy* that Schelling's state is not a democracy. Since he sees individual freedom as a sinful illusion, it is impossible for him to affirm that,

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[26] Spinoza, *Ethics,* 1d7.
[27] Spinoza, *Ethics*, 5p38.
[28] "… an allem Guten und Schönen in einem öffentlichen Leben." SW VI: 575.
[29] See Scheerlinck, "Die Konstruktion des Staates," 207-27.

> … in acting, the human being could be satisfied with the arbitrariness and freedom of all. To expect a rational development from that would be as foolish as to expect it from a play without a poet and in which everyone played their part independently at their own discretion (SW VI: 555).[30]

Schelling's worry is that grounding government on the freedom of all would surrender society to arbitrariness. The state thus needs, on his account, a kind of government that is not grounded on the freedom of all. While the *System of the Whole of Philosophy* does not tell us anything about this kind of government, the newly published material shows that Schelling envisioned a state with two classes of people: a class of *the free* and a class of *the unfree*.[31]

Schelling's view of a class society is once more conspicuously influenced by Plato. He tells us that the class of the unfree is occupied with personal affairs. The unfree possess private property, have a job, and lead a family life.[32] They have nothing to do with the administration of the state. The government is taken over exclusively by the class of the free. Among them are philosophers, soldiers, lawmakers, and artists.[33] The freedom of the free becomes manifest in the fact that they do not possess private property. Neither do they work. The unfree supply them with all of their material needs. In turn, the free defend the state and the households of the unfree against enemies and establish a legal order.[34] Schelling characterizes the class of the free as a collective of brave and virtuous men who devote all their energy to the well-being and administration of society. The laws they make emanate from reason—that is from the one substance, god's absolute nature—and they are laws for the unfree alone.[35]

It is important to see how this political vision fits into the ontological framework of Schelling's Würzburg identity philosophy. I propose to distinguish two axes in Schelling's description. The first one is a *horizontal* axis on which the two classes manifest the two poles of everything that exists. The free represent the subjective pole and the unfree represent the objective pole of God's absolute nature. Both together

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[30] "… der Mensch im Handeln sich mit der Willkür und Freiheit aller begnügen [könnte], von welcher … eine vernünftige Entwicklung zu erwarten ebenso thöricht wäre, als sie von einem Schauspiel erwarten, das keinen Dichter hat, und in dem jeder für sich und nach Gefallen seine Rolle spielt." SW VI: 555.

[31] Schelling articulates such a view also in the 1804 *Philosophy and Religion* (SW VI: 65) and already in the 1802 *Lectures on the Method of Academic Studies* (SW V: 260-1; 314-5). Moreover, he continues to speak of a "distinction between rulers and ruled that is … derived from the world of ideas [*von der Ideenwelt sich herschreibenden Unterschied zwischen Herrschenden und Beherrschte*n]" (SW XI: 540) in Lecture 23 of the *Presentation of the Purely Rational Philosophy,* published in English as part of "Schelling's Late Political Philosophy: Lectures 22-24 of the Presentation of the Purely Rational Philosophy," trans. Kyla Bruff, *Kabiri* 2: 93-135, here 109.

[32] Schelling according to Pauls in Scheerlinck, "Die Konstruktion des Staates," 224.

[33] Schelling according to Pauls in Scheerlinck, "Die Konstruktion des Staates," 226.

[34] Schelling according to Pauls in Scheerlinck, "Die Konstruktion des Staates," 219-20.

[35] Schelling according to Pauls in Scheerlinck, "Die Konstruktion des Staates," 223.

mirror the ontological structure of the one substance that is at the basis of all reality. The division into two classes is thus in complete accordance with the basic layout of Schelling's metaphysical naturalism. A consequence of the metaphysical grounding of the state is that the dual structure of society neither needs to be affirmed nor authorized by the people who live in that state. As it depends on what Schelling sees as true being, the state is neither a genuine result of human choice nor a product of human activity. Schelling's ontology rather demands from a divine standpoint, as it were, an oppositional social order of free and unfree people. Insofar as the free and the unfree represent subjectivity and objectivity, Schelling also describes them as the soul and body of the state.[36]

The second axis implies a *vertical* hierarchy. In this perspective, Schelling describes the free as standing in a closer relationship with the eternal substance than the unfree. In contrast to the free, the unfree are linked to the sphere of individual entities.[37] While the first axis suggests that both classes are on the same level and equally necessary to manifest the dual structure of the eternal substance, the second axis introduces a precedence of the free over the unfree. This precedence is grounded in the fact that the opposition between the two classes is defined by a difference in degree as to their being. The free stand closer to God and have thus "more" being than the unfree who exist farther away from God.

In Schelling's description of the two classes, it may seem at first as if the freedom of the free consisted solely in their detachment from the responsibility to cater to their own material needs. Correspondingly, the unfreedom of the unfree seems to consist in their involvement in common practices that secure their subsistence. However, Schelling's definition of freedom in his lectures states: "*Freedom is a defection from everything that is concrete, unfreedom is a defection from the universal and the ideal.*"[38] This definition does not only pertain to the ways of life that Schelling associates with the two classes. It contains a stronger claim: the unfreedom of the individual is due to a defection from the true freedom of God's absolute nature. Freedom as a renunciation of everything concrete is conceived of as a reversal of this defection und thus a return to God. In this perspective, the unfreedom of the unfree stems first and foremost from the fact that they are linked to the sphere of individual entities who have, according to Schelling, a precarious ontological status and do not have access to true freedom. The free, in contrast, can ultimately only be those who maintain a particularly close relationship to the divine substance.

It is clear that Schelling developed his view of the ideal state entirely on the basis of and according to the ontology he defends. The precarious ontological status of individuals and the denial of individual freedom fundamentally define the roles that humans may play in society. The space for political activity in this state is as small as it is ontologically determined from the bottom up. Schelling's ontology proves to be

[36] Schelling according to Pauls in Scheerlinck, "Die Konstruktion des Staates," 217-8.
[37] Schelling according to Pauls in Scheerlinck, "Die Konstruktion des Staates," 216.
[38] "Freyheit ist Lossagung von allem Concreten, die Nicht-Freyheit Lossagen vom Allgemeinen und Idealen" (Schelling according to Pauls in Scheerlinck, "Die Konstruktion des Staates," 223).

political as it predetermines society even before he turns explicitly to the state and its inner constitution.

It is both worrisome and coherent with Schelling's ontology that the free legislate only for the unfree. The free do not need laws precisely because they immediately actualize freedom without any rules in that they exist in a closeness to the divine substance, eventually even in a unification with God. Within the framework of his theory, Schelling can argue that only those who do not achieve such a unification need guidance by laws. The unfree who are not in direct contact with God depend on the guidance of the free. The laws help them to learn externally what they do not know through immediate insight, immediate unity, or at least closeness to God. As coherent as it may be, this structure of society resembles an elitist theocracy.

It is instructive to see that Spinoza comes to an entirely different view of the political on the grounds of his ontology. Spinoza grants a positive ontological status to individual beings. While Schelling derives his political idea directly from God's absolute nature, Spinoza develops his political philosophy on the basis of the individual's *conatus*. Driven by the *conatus,* an individual wants whatever she or he finds appropriate to support her or his striving for self-preservation. Freedom can be achieved by an individual through knowledge of what truly benefits her or his *conatus*. Among the insights into what truly serves an individual's *conatus* counts, as Spinoza outlines in 4p18 and 4p35 of the *Ethics*, that there is nothing more useful to a human being than another human being who leads a life guided by reason.[39] He says against Hobbes, "*A human being is a God to another human being* (*homine hominem Deus esse).*"[40]

The difference between Schelling and Spinoza can hardly be exemplified in a clearer way. If we encounter God in another human being, we are never really outside of God's absolute nature. There is thus no necessity to return to God. Rather, we encounter God everywhere we meet other people. Spinoza argues in this very context for the necessity of a state because it is hard for humans to lead an independent life guided by reason and not by affect. Political institutions help to strengthen reason against affective temptations that lead our self-interest astray.

In the *Political Treatise*, Spinoza develops his political philosophy further. He argues that all political power is derived from the *potentia multitudinis*, the power of the multitude.[41] The multitude is essentially a group of individuals who come together to collectively pursue their *conatus*. As they cooperate, the potential to succeed in the strife for self-preservation grows for each individual. With the power of the multitude, Spinoza introduces a basic democratic principle at the heart of political legitimacy at large.[42] All specific forms of government that Spinoza discusses (monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy) depend on this principle. It is of fundamental importance

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[39] Spinoza, *Ethics,* 4p18s.

[40] Spinoza, *Ethics,* 4p35s. Translation here is mine; George Eliot translates this as: "The God of man is man."

[41] Baruch de Spinoza, *Political Treatise*, ed. and trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2005), 2.17.

[42] On this point, see Gunnar Hindrichs, ed., *Die Macht der Menge: Über die Aktualität einer Denkfigur Spinozas* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2006); Martin Saar, *Die Immanenz der Macht: Politische Theorie nach Spinoza* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2013).

because it legitimizes political power from the people to the state. For Spinoza, the standard by which political legitimacy must be judged is the aggregated *conatus* of a multiplicity of individuals. It is not God or the eternal substance as such.

The difference between Schelling's and Spinoza's positions can be traced back to the ontological status they grant to the individual. The fact that the ontological status of the individual is precarious in Schelling prohibits him for principal reasons from affirming a democratic position. If the individual is supposed to play a political role, it cannot be disqualified already on the level of ontology. Because Schelling denies that the individual truly exists, he cannot assign a substantial role to it in any sphere of the actual world. Spinoza's achievement is that he is a monist and a metaphysical naturalist who is even committed to necessitarianism. But he nevertheless grants a surprisingly large space for the individual and a democratic form of finite social life. Spinoza shows that monism does not necessarily exclude the sphere of individuality, neither ontologically nor politically. Schelling's view of the state in the 1804 identity philosophy falls short of this important feature of Spinoza's position. Schelling's conception of the state in 1804 is totalitarian and as such deeply problematic.

The conviction that individuals do not truly exist distinguishes Schelling's position not only from the one Spinoza defends. In 1804, Schelling even falls short of his own view of the state that he defended only four years earlier in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*. The principal function of the state then consisted precisely in securing individual freedom. Schelling refers to individual freedom indeed as "the holiest":

> The holiest ought not to be entrusted to chance. It must be made impossible, through the constraint of an unbreakable law, that in the interaction of all the freedom of the individual should be abolished (SW III: 582).[43]

Securing the freedom of the individual can only be achieved, according to the *System of Transcendental Idealism*, if the state is a "second nature":

> A second and higher nature must, as it were, be set up over the first, governed by a natural law quite different, however, form that which prevails in visible nature, namely a natural law on behalf of freedom. As inexorably, and with the same iron necessity where by effect follows cause in sensible nature, an attack upon freedom of another must be succeeded, in this second nature, by an instantaneous counter to the self-interested drive (SW III: 582).[44]

The state here resembles *nature* because its laws are as strict as natural laws. However, the state is a *second* nature because it is not a given. It is set-up and created by humans

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[43] F.W.J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism (1800)*, trans. Peter Heach (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1978), 195.
[44] Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism (1800)*, 195.

on behalf of their freedom. The difference of this conception to the one Schelling defends in Würzburg is remarkable: not only does he affirm individual freedom in 1800, he sees the state as a product of human activity.[45] This appreciation of human practice and individual freedom drops out in 1804.

Yet the Würzburg conception of the state was not Schelling's last word on the subject. As he began to rethink his view of individual freedom in the *Freedom Essay* (1809), he modified his conception of the state too. He presented an alternative conception of the political sphere in the *Stuttgart Seminars* (1810), where he tried to combine his new appreciation of individual freedom with the form of a philosophical system that informed his identity philosophy. The state appears still as a second nature but now as a "curse" that must be overcome:

> The natural unity, this second nature superimposed on the first, to which man must necessarily take recourse, is the *state*; and, to put it bluntly, the state is thus a consequence of the curse that has been placed on humanity. Because man no longer has God for his unity, he must submit to a material unity (SW VII: 461).[46]

The state thus fills a void. It is set up to overcome a fundamental disunity among humans. It is striking that Schelling thinks at this point that not only some human beings (the unfree) are separated from God but *humanity* at large. While the state tries to reunite humanity, Schelling is convinced that in truth "only *God* can be the unity of free beings" (SW VII: 461).[47] He argues that the state as a merely material power faces the problem that a "free spirit … will never consider [such] a natural unity sufficient, and a higher talisman is required; consequently, any unity that originates in the state remains inevitably precarious and provisional" (SW VII: 461).[48] What drives humans beyond the state is thus precisely their individual freedom. Neither their ontological status nor their freedom seem to be precarious. Instead, what is precarious is the state. Hence, it must be overcome.

The idea of an overcoming of the state in the name of freedom appears of course already in the so-called *Oldest Systematic Program of German Idealism*: "We must therefore go beyond the state! For every state must treat free human beings as if they

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[45] Schelling assigns a constitutive role to god also in 1800. He argues that a particular state can only persist if there is "an organization extending beyond the individual state, a federation of all states, who mutually guarantee their respective regimes" (SW III, 586-7; transl. Heach, 198). Inspired by Kant, Schelling argues for a "state of states" and "an international tribunal, composed of members of all civilized nations, and having at its command against each rebellious state-individual the power of all the rest" (SW III, 586-7; transl. Heach, 198). However, Schelling argues, unlike Kant, that the emergence of such an international order depends ultimately on an absolute identity of necessity and contingency at the heart of all human activity.

[46] F.W.J. Schelling, *Stuttgart Seminars*, in *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory: Three Essays by F.W.J. Schelling*, trans. & ed. Thomas Pfau (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), 227.

[47] Schelling, *Stuttgart Seminars*, 226.

[48] Schelling, *Stuttgart Seminars*, 226.

were cogs in a machine; but that it should not do; therefore it should *cease* to exist."[49] Even though the authorship of this text remains unclear, it bears a striking resemblance to Schelling's view of the state after the *Freedom Essay*. The idea of an overcoming of the state still informs his latest text, the *Presentation of the Purely Rational Philosophy*: "The task is therefore: to provide the individual with the greatest possible freedom (autarchy), freedom, namely, that rises above and, as it were, beyond the state" (SW XI: 543).[50] Schelling's expectation is that a true ethical community may be prepared but never fully actualized in an institutional framework. It rather requires an inner bond of the heart.[51] The fact that Schelling describes the ethical community he has in mind often in religious metaphors may make it difficult for secular readers to appreciate its philosophical import. Yet, Schelling's position can be seen as a philosophical plea for the idea that individual human freedom can ultimately only be fully actualized in informal relations among good-willed individuals. Such a community would be inspired not by laws but by love and—as I would like to read it—original and broad forms of solidarity.

In light of the conceptions of the state that Schelling put forward before and after 1804, his political naturalism during the Würzburg period certainly appears exceptional. It is a reminder of the dangers that arise from the attempt to deduce a political order form a putative metaphysical truth. We cannot give up on the idea that a state must freely be established and organized by humans for humans. A metaphysics which rejects the possibility of free human action is therefore never adequate. Yet if we defend the idea against the Schelling of 1804 that the state must be the product of human freedom, the question of the later Schelling remains to be discussed: is the state also a sphere in which human freedom can be fully actualized?

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[49] Anonymous, "The Oldest Systematic Program of German Idealism," in *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics*, ed. Frederick Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012), 4.
[50] Schelling, *Schelling's Late Philosophy: Lectures 22-24*, 121.
[51] See Kyla Bruff, "Translator's Introduction," in *Schelling's Late Philosophy: Lectures 22-24*, 94.

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Schelling and Nietzsche: On Setting Free the God of Love

Joseph P. Lawrence

If prudence is the best advice for those who seek to establish their identity by pursuing a career, it is courage that remains the indispensable virtue for anyone committed to philosophy. If academics in general, career-oriented as they are, can be forgiven for acquiescing to a culture of political correctness, philosophers cannot. A philosopher's duty is to question authority, regardless of which party happens to be in power. It is for this reason that I have chosen to highlight that dimension of Schelling's and Nietzsche's thinking that is most explicitly opposed to the secular religion of progress that forms the core of capitalist modernity. Whether the religion of progress manifests itself in the economic liberalism of the Right or in the cultural liberalism of the Left, the result is always the same: contempt and hostility for whatever nature herself has put forth. While it is true that, in Schelling's view, divinity steps into existence by subduing its own dark ground, it does not follow that he believes that divinity then casts aside what it has subdued. For, as is particularly clear in its pagan manifestation, the ground of divinity is nature, the shared ground of life as such. Because divinity completes itself only in being shared, it must allow the dark ground to continue to operate, finding suitable company only in what, like it, has the courage to stand up to darkness. Whereas the merely human, governed by fear, would control nature, the divinely human would much rather set it free.

I

Schelling, like Hölderlin, recognized in Dionysus the truth of Christ's claim that "before Abraham was, I am" (John 8: 58). Dionysus, the god of madness and drunkenness, the god dismembered in violence and resurrected in glory, was, for both Schelling and Hölderlin, more than the mythical prototype of Jesus; he was the very person himself; he was the god, now alive in the man.

But what, one may well wonder, could this joining together of the pagan and the Christian have to do with Nietzsche, the opponent of all things Christian? Or, to put the same question differently, what could Nietzsche, the self-avowed Anti-Christ, possibly have to do with Schelling, whose entire late philosophy was devoted to a restoration and transformation of Christianity, albeit a Christianity that in some important manner had been "paganized"?

But what if Schelling's purpose was not anything along the lines of "restoring Christian morality," but instead the demonstration that Christian moralism is a kind of Pharisaism in a new key that is incompatible with true Christianity? What if for Schelling too the true goal lies "beyond good and evil"? And what if, by announcing the death of God, Nietzsche's aim was less to shock the sensibility of proclaimed Christians than to challenge a secular culture that is indifferent to that death, smug in its assumption that morality was the only thing of value in the entire Christian tradition—and that government by law is its final achievement? What, in other words, if Nietzsche's real insight is that modernity, far from being the purpose of history, is itself the greatest barrier to the realization of that purpose, which is instead the birthing of divinity?

"Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster himself," Nietzsche famously wrote, for "if you stare long enough into an abyss, the abyss will stare back into you."[1] Simply declaring the death of God does nothing to release us from the yoke of Christian morality, if it indeed turns out that our own paranoia (the God staring at us from the abyss), is what first set the yoke in place. Surveillance cameras and all of the other instruments of the panopticon that the fearful install in the name of safety (whether in the face of a highly contagious virus, the possibility of a terrorist attack, or the messiness of human sexuality) constitute a threat more objectively real than religion's fantasy of a severe and all-seeing God who looks down at us from above.

Paranoia, if unassuaged, gives rise to a social order that ends up justifying paranoia. Evil, after all, would have died out long ago if it did not keep reproducing itself in the righteous anger of its innocent victims. To fight evil is to extend its reign. Schelling's idea that the actualization of the divinity tames its own monstrous ground by letting it continue to operate is the metaphysical correlate of Christ's dictum, "resist not evil"(Matthew 5:39).

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[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, § 146, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 89.

The spirit of *ressentiment* that, within the history of Christianity, turned innocent victims into vindictive brutes, happy to oversee the horrors of the Inquisition, drives secular social-justice warriors in exactly the same way. The determination to "punish evil doers" is what keeps evil alive. If we are to learn anything from the twentieth century, it is that wars fought in the name of a purely secular conception of justice are more, not less, destructive than the religious wars of the seventeenth century. The Christian who refuses to show mercy is common enough, but at least this much can be said: he is not a true Christian. Warriors for justice, on the other hand, whether they are neo-conservatives who want to make the world safe for democracy or millennial progressives determined to cleanse the world forever of the evils of racism and sexism, operate within the bounds of ideological closure: "Do what we know to be right or accept the punishment that must follow." Here there is no possibility of showing mercy. Precisely where it is tolerance that is to fill the void of the absent God, it will quickly become evident that intolerance cannot be tolerated. The contradiction is what guarantees the ephemerality of what sustains itself only within a reign of terror. Law as such can never accommodate the fact that what is alive undergoes constant change.

"After Buddha was dead," Nietzsche said, "his shadow was still shown for centuries in a cave." The same thing holds, he adds, for the death of God. "Given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown. And we—we still have to vanquish his shadow, too."[2] The shadow of God is the will to punish. It has not gone away.

But the God who died was the God who was never alive, the God whose commands were final and could be known. What Pascal called the living God was a God more elusive by far: "Cut the throat of your son Isaac" is different than "Let Isaac go." The living God is the Dionysian God. It is Jesus remembering what each of us should struggle to call to mind: before we came to life in ourselves, we were alive in nature, not at all though, who we are now.

Nietzsche the atheist and Schelling the Christian were both aware of the error of trying to understand God (whatever it is that gives life to the universe) through the shibboleth of eternal self-identity, perfection understood as rising up above and beyond time. The God of the Church was, for Schelling just as for Nietzsche, as "above and beyond" life as is death itself. In the age of nihilism, the age we ourselves inhabit, the shadow of God is worshiped in the cult of both science and the modern state, both making a claim of the self-certainty of law. The lifeless corpse of God is kept frozen in the form of a positivistic atheism that, far from being the negation of Christianity is actually its fulfillment.[3] What was once called God is preserved in the mechanical order that is the object of science and the project of the state.[4]

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[2] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science,* §108, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 167.

[3] Nietzsche, *Gay Science,* § 347, 287-290.

[4] Éric Blondel, *Nietzsche: Le «Cinquième 'Evangile'» ?* (Paris: Les Bergers, 1980).

If Schelling, inspired by Hölderlin, recognized in Dionysus the generative principle of the whole of mythology who stepped into history with the birth of Jesus, Nietzsche discerned in him the noumenal great self who slumbers in everything that lives, awakening into divinity only in the recognition of his own eternal recurrence. But to the degree that that recurrence is eternal, it cannot be suspended or willed away. Existence at its deepest level is suffering, something we are thrust into, not something we have chosen for ourselves. If Dionysus is the ever-shifting life of all that lives, whether plant, animal, or human, Dionysus is also a reminder of how persistently even a god must look away from itself. Before taking joy in forms that can never contain it, the god is first of all consciousness in flight from the unbearable reality of the real, what Nietzsche calls its eternality. If we ourselves are in flight, it is because the god has flown into us. This is the monster that lives in us all. An existential angst that can never be overcome, it is yet the freedom that breaks forth once its truth is acknowledged, a freedom that is called madness by all of those still hemmed in by their fears.

It is this internal tension that makes the god so fundamentally illusive, discernible only in the questions that pose themselves. Is it, for example, stability and comfort that the god seeks when wearing a mask? Or is the mask put on, simply for the joy of tearing it apart, awareness of freedom so much more important than the thirst for identity? Is the god the legislator who lays down the law or the free spirit who mocks every letter of the law? How does one comprehend this Proteus, now a he, now a she, the one god alive in every god, the intoxicated spirit who is so seemingly indifferent to whether he, she, or it is in hell or in heaven? To worship such a god requires a mind and heart free of idolatry and ideology. Attuned to the rhythm of honest thought, it conceives what can be conceived, only to abandon what it has conceived once the real overwhelms the ideal. The piety of thought is the courage to live without easy answers. If the real is infinite, the ideal is necessarily finite (what can be *defined*) and thus never more than provisional.

True greatness is for that reason intrinsically bound to poverty of spirit. As Nietzsche knew, strength that arms itself against fear is never a match for the disarming strength that comes with innocence. "What can the child do that even the lion cannot? … The child is innocence and forgetfulness, a new beginning, a sport, a self-propelling wheel, a first motion, a sacred Yes."[5] Or, in the words of Christ, "Unless you change and become as little children, you will not enter into the kingdom of God" (Matthew 18: 3).

The god that Nietzsche declared dead was a god already dead, for this god (the god of morality) was just another idol. The true god is Dionysus, god of life and death and always more life. His is a movement that stretches out from a beginning to whatever shelter one can devise, always aiming for a future that will justify the destruction of temporary shelters. Nietzsche is the heir to Pascal. His Dionysus, like

[5] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "Of the Three Metamorphoses," 2nd ed., trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 1969), 55.

the living God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is the antithesis of the God of the philosophers and theologians (the inalterable A=A).

Schelling too was in Pascal's camp. Positive philosophy, which has as its field the unpredictable saga of history, was his answer to metaphysics. Already in this Schelling had cut ties with Orthodox Christianity. If Christianity is reverence for Christ crucified, then little wonder that so few Christians dare to emulate Christ. Schelling, like Nietzsche, revered the courageous one, the god-man who set love of life above any law, knowing as he did that the kingdom of God is the strength not only to endure, but to *embrace*, the punishment that then will follow. The solace of the kingdom is not an empty promise of joy to come, the reward for obedience, but a present joy that has no need for obedience, and is so palpable and real that even the thief on the cross knew it when he saw it, knew it so well that he understood what he heard when the man tortured beside him said: "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43), according to Nietzsche, the words that contain the whole of the Gospel.[6]

Paradise, in other words, has nothing to do with the contemporary claim to a universal right to comfort, for what is paradise other than victory over pain? Once death becomes no more than just another challenge to be faced courageously, the monster has been tamed.

But death is not the ultimate monster, for death comes easily enough to the weary. The monster is the god that demands social cohesion, revealing itself in the fury of the lynch mob.[7] Whereas death is as natural as a tree shedding its leaves, the lynch mob acts in the name of a good that, transcending nature, rules over death. The frenzied crowd that tears its victims apart is sustained in its frenzy by its moral certitude, proud in its insistence on a law that, with the gruesome punishment in mind, will never again be defied. To have lain down the law, to have shown clearly just what it is that society will never tolerate, shows itself as a matter of such urgency that questions of guilt and innocence are regarded as secondary. In the name of justice, we deny justice to anyone who stands accused. Whether guilty or innocent, what is important is that they serve as a suitable reminder of the evil that must be cast out. The measure of the goodness of the good is that it is worth fighting for, even worth ripping people to shreds.

Wars of plunder are small and can be contained. Wars fought in the name of justice, whether uttered in a religious or a secular vein, are greater than that, just as the god in whose name they are fought is greater than his competitors. The monster-god thrives on the food that is fed him, and the best food is, as ever, human flesh.

To get a sense for what it might mean to tame such a god, the god of vengeance, we can draw our cue from Christ, who once accomplished the difficult art of defusing a lynch mob. When the crowd began to gather, each man reaching down

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[6] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ,* § 35, in *Twilight of the Idols/The Anti-Christ*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 158.

[7] René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

for a stone with which to beat down an adulteress, Christ's response was to write sins in the sand before challenging the self-righteous crowd: "Let the one among you who is without sin cast the first stone" (John: 8.7). The monster-god was tamed by one who, understanding in himself what others call sin, knew what it is that people conceal in themselves by pretending to find it in others. Who, after all, moved by lust, has not committed adultery in his heart? (Matthew 5: 27-28). What woman has not, in a fit of anger, wanted to commit murder? What man or woman has not, in a moment of despair, joined hands with Satan in wishing the whole world would disappear? The key to taming the monster-god without is to recognize the monster-god within, to understand that what makes us eager to believe the worst in others is that we carry this worst already within ourselves. For Nietzsche as for Schelling, the monstrous is intertwined with the heart, even into its most unconscious recesses, apparent only from time to time in dreams too morbid to recount. Recognizing the hell within is the first step in the harrowing of that hell, for recognition is the first step to acceptance. The sin I no longer hide is no longer a sin. "He who acts in truth comes into the light, to make clear that his deeds are done in God" (John: 3: 21).

To know oneself as a monster is already to love oneself sufficiently to initiate an introspective gaze. Self-love begins as confession. What makes confession possible is a doubling within the self, evil impulses covering over a primordial innocence that is situated in a depth greater even than the monstrous. Honesty is naïve, for it assumes that something good can come from the worst. Only the greatest honesty recognizes in the self the impulse to every crime that has ever been committed. What is genocide but the acting out of hatred? What is global destruction but the acting out of despair? There are moments when each of us has sought the destruction of all that lives and breathes. Sullied by a will that says No, we ourselves are guilty, even deserving of the collective suicide that humanity has flirted with ever since its technological prowess has grown sufficient to do the job. On a deeper level, however, the No is simply the challenge that provides depth and substance to the Yes. The only Yes that is truly a Yes understands the No as its ground and condition.

If the monster-god is to be tamed only by accepting monstrosity itself as the necessary condition of life, then the real problem of life is to find the strength for this kind of affirmation, to penetrate, that is, beyond whatever I myself may or may not desire in order to lay open the source of life itself. Jesus thus found his strength in the "Father," the seething power of nature itself. Writing sins in the shifting sands might have turned the tide when only a dozen or so were gathered in anger. But beyond that, the very son of God lacks the power to effect real change.

When history veers off the rails, there is nothing any of us can do, beyond acknowledging the despair we must feel, thankful only that the monster-god has come into sight. In an age obsessed with what by right should be ours, *amor fati* is not even remotely an option. Instead we rage at the evil we see outside of us until, like Robespierre, we ourselves fall victim to the guillotine we have put into place. Morality is unforgiving in its insistence upon purity. As much as we would like to escape the evil of self-devouring nature, our very attempt to effect that escape implicates us in it. Stoicism would appear to be our only option. It is the path taken by Nietzsche.

II

If Schelling and Nietzsche are united in their common embrace of Dionysus, they differ in one very significant respect: whereas Nietzsche, wounded by his own fragility, insists (as any good Stoic must) upon the need to harden the heart, Schelling insists that the heart must remain open.

On both sides, however, forgiveness remains the highest virtue. Why this is the case for Nietzsche can be inferred from his unwavering critique of those who blame others for things that go wrong. What he sees as their primary mistake is their failure to understand that it is, indeed "things" that have gone wrong. Little of what happens in the world is the result of someone "willing" it. As Nietzsche remarked, "the doctrine of will has been invented essentially for the purpose of punishment, that is of *finding guilty*."[8] Free will construed as an active cause is a piece of fiction put into place to help us justify our desire for revenge. In pointing this out, Nietzsche was not only speaking out against the *ressentiment* that leads Christians (and other moralists) to take joy in the idea that their enemies should be damned in hell forever, but he was also just as clearly aligning himself *with* Christianity's call for forgiveness.

In this, he placed himself on the side of the crucified Christ. Whereas the followers of Christ soon enough complained, "destroy the bastards, for they have killed our beloved" (thus giving birth to two millennia of Christian antisemitism), the one they venerated spoke the simple but seemingly impossible words, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23: 34), a sentiment that Nietzsche echoes by taking on the spirit of revenge. Caught up in evil events, human beings have the questionable habit of immediately looking for evil actors. When "shit happens" we pretend that we have been attacked by someone with a malevolent will. Even a viral pandemic will quickly be framed as a battle between good and bad people.

But the truth is that, even where it wills actively, the will wills blindly—willing for reasons that no one can fathom, reasons that impact a vast nervous system extending far beyond what we consciously feel, much less what we consciously command, until it reveals itself in a complex web of pains and desires and memories and traumas, some of which are apparent and acutely remembered, others of which are hidden and long forgotten. As much as we moderns would like to believe that the world can be bent to our own will, the true ground of action remains nature itself, for nature is the ground of all willing. As much as we would like to make it into the mechanical object of our manipulations, it is nature that is the operative subject, not the self-conscious subject of a person acting in the world. This is Dionysian insight.

It is the insight that inclined both Schelling and Nietzsche toward an ethic of forgiveness (which, for those obsessed by the need for "justice" is no ethic at all). Although Nietzsche has quite a lot to say in praise of warriors, he also has a keen sense of where wars go awry. Once we forget that a war is more like an earthquake than a willed event, our enemies appear as demons fit for torture. But a war is in fact like an earthquake: there are causes, to be sure, but they are indeterminate in number

[8] Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 65.

and hidden well from sight. A virtuous warrior rises to the challenge that an eruption of violence poses, fighting ideally without anger. In contrast, a warrior who is blinded by morality will be bent on the utter destruction and humiliation of the enemy.

But the error of blaming others is a manifold one. Exaggerating the freedom of the will in order to make the evildoer seem responsible for what has gone wrong and thus deserving of punishment is only half of the story. The bigger problem that emerges is that, in defining evil as the freely chosen action of someone who exercises power over the weak, one defines goodness as its opposite. Weakness then appears as virtue. For Nietzsche, this was the error of cultural Christianity, one that survives in today's cult of victimhood. Evil is aligned with power and excess of agency, goodness with weakness and lack of agency. From the Nietzschean perspective, the "Me-Too" movement, far from representing a courageous challenge to Christian patriarchy, simply represents the secular framing of what had always been Christianity's primary obsession, the cult of the crucified.

This does not mean that Nietzsche has simply sided with the bullies. For him, a healthy will to power is the power of self-overcoming. To this degree, he too stands on the side of the downfallen.[9] Only those who have fallen can pick themselves up. One thinks here of the misfits who accompany Zarathustra at the moment of his highest revelation. To pity them, though, is to "lack reverence for great misfortune, great ugliness, great failure."[10] This is where self-overcoming and true power begin. To exercise the will to power one must risk and even suspend whatever power one has, for the will springs to life only in the search for what one does not have. For the person who has everything, the will to power must entail the search for making do with nothing whatsoever. "Where is your inner value if you no longer know what it is to breathe freely? If you no longer possess the slightest power over yourselves? … If you no longer believe in philosophy that wears rags, in the free-heartedness of him without needs?"[11]

Health is given not in the form of power but in the form of the will. The will is not the power of free choice that only those privileged with good fortune can exercise. Its condition is instead the "going under" of suffering defeat. Whereas the fantasy of equality confers honor on victims by making it seem that, lacking what others have, they "deserve" restitution in the form of their share of the pie, the only real honor comes with the discovery that, having been made to experience pain, people now know how much they can bear and the enormity of the risks they can take. They know what it is to be held up by nature, the giver of life.

True honor is neither conferred by right nor does it represent society's seal of approval. Instead it is given in the form of self-respect when one learns, for instance, that one is not simply hungry but is good at being hungry, good enough to have the real hope of becoming an actual hunger artist. Those who enjoy success and

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[9] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "Prologue," 44.
[10] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* "The Ugliest Man," 277.
[11] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 206.

privilege are insulated from any such urgent need to become who they are. Nietzsche regards them as "soft" and nowhere applauds them. This is why in his critique of Jewish slave morality he nowhere says anything negative about Jews themselves. If a people enslaved to the ancient Egyptians found their way to a god who inspired them to action, then all the more power to them. The critique of slave morality entails no judgment about those who have been enslaved. Once tested by forty years in the desert, the chosen land is rightfully theirs. Nietzsche speaks positively about the Jewish people, about their Bible, and about the cunning way they used slave morality to enact revenge on their enemies, even to the point of inventing Christianity to take down the Roman Empire. And if the Roman ideal was somehow Nietzsche's ideal, he still had no reason for complaint. Good stoics, after all, become better stoics if they are sufficiently wise to find profit in their humiliation.

The cult of the victim is, according to the simple calculus of "equal rights," geared toward a Brave-New-World dystopia in which the mass of humanity, incapable of taking care of themselves, are to be fed, pampered, and protected by a regime that denies liberty in the name of safety.

But what if, hidden away in weakness, there is an entirely different kind of strength? What, in other words, if the suffering masses, instead of being patronized and pampered, could be recognized as themselves having something to say? If a Nietzschean populism sounds implausible, it is perhaps because we still haven't understood Nietzsche.[12] If Nietzsche is right that suffering, instead of simply constituting a deplorable condition that deserves compensation, is itself a good to the degree that it is born with dignity and grace, what better readers could he find than members of the suffering poor?

What if innocence had nothing to do with helplessness? What if there were an innocence that is the source of a power more powerful than the power of the bully? Whereas bullies live life in the element of fear, flexing their muscles (or orchestrating their tweets) as a way of shielding themselves from potential competitors, the truly innocent have the strength of fearlessness. If ever we are to be true to the earth,[13] we shall have to overcome our fear of the wilderness. Rednecks in the boonies may understand truths that the children of suburban comfort can scarcely imagine.

If we are to be true to the earth, we have to begin with an innocence impervious to fear. If the fearful have set fire to the earth's vast reservoirs of coal and oil, they have done so in the name of our "right" to live in safety and comfort. In contrast, the innocent of the earth have never felt a need to build a fire larger than the one burning in the hearth. Maximum control is a tight fist that nature itself will undo, teaching, as nature always has taught, the virtue of poverty. "Back to nature" represents a horror only for those who, having been deprived of what one learns in the School of Hard Knocks, know nothing about their own resiliency.

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[12] Nor for that matter, have we understood ourselves. Automatically decrying every manner of populism as "right-wing" reveals just how elite and undemocratic the purportedly egalitarian Left has become.
[13] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "Prologue," 42.

"Praised be a moderate poverty!"—praised be those who have freed themselves of the twin idolatries of the state and of money.[14] In the words of Jesus, "Blessed are the poor" (Luke 6: 20), those who live in the wild open of nature. "Look at the birds of the air … see the lilies of the field … not even Solomon in all of his splendor was dressed like one of these" (Matthew 6: 26-30). Nietzsche's critique of Christianity doubles as an esoteric encomium of a Christ who lives outside the state and, what on Nietzsche's understanding is the same, outside the Church.[15] Sections 27 through 40 of the *Anti-Christ* pay tribute to the greatness of Christ in order to highlight the contemptible nature of a Christianity that knows nothing of that greatness.[16] Christ's battle with the Pharisees anticipated and to some extent even inspired Nietzsche's own battle with Christianity. The alignment goes further than that. Anyone who has read Nietzsche's account of Zarathustra in *Ecce Homo* knows the degree to which he felt himself the recipient of the full force of revelation, where "all being wishes to become word."[17] Nature, offering itself up as metaphor, speaks with authority to one who has sufficient humility to listen. "It is not I that speaks, but the Father that speaks in me" (John 12:49 and John 14:10), words of sufficient authority that they can get a man humble enough to have open ears crucified for blasphemy.

As the "*supreme type of all beings,*"[18] Nietzsche's alter-ego Zarathustra is Dionysus himself.[19] It is Dionysus who, aware of his own eternal recurrence, is liberated from the spirit of revenge. Instead of viewing the past as a progressive does, through the lens of a sin that, ineradicable, must now be punished, one must view the past as itself worthy of affirmation. In the image of my enslaved ancestor, I can learn to see the power of endurance that is also mine. The redemption of the past is forgiveness of sin writ large. Thus, the allusions that, throughout the text of *Zarathustra*, bind together the names of Zarathustra and Christ. From "love thy enemy" (a constantly recurring theme)[20] to "judge not that you be not judged,"[21] the echoes resound. From the "Stillest Hour" (with its weary "Father, take this cup from me") to the raucous "Last Supper" that follows (with its crowning "do this in memory of me"), Nietzsche makes it clear how much he sought to have his Zarathustra walk

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[14] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "Of the New Idol," 77.

[15] To the name Nietzsche, one can add the name of Agamben, who understands clearly the tragic irony that Christ announced the Kingdom of God while history gave us the monstrosity of the Church instead. See Giorgi Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

[16] Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, 149-163.

[17] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale and Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 301.

[18] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 306.

[19] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 307.

[20] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 83, 87, 108.

[21] "And you, scarlet judge, if you would speak aloud all you have done in thought, everyone would cry: 'away with this filth and poisonous snake!'" Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "Of the Pale Criminal," 65.

in the footsteps of Christ.[22] All of this is distilled into the sheer heaviness of the doctrine of eternal recurrence, a teaching so horrific, so monstrous, that, when announcing it, Zarathustra falls into a seven-day swoon. Only those sufficiently educated in suffering will understand the monstrosity of a doctrine that calls for the eternal recurrence of pain as well as joy. It is to underscore this monstrosity that Nietzsche places it in the mouth of the world's Ugliest Man.[23] What apparent foolishness to say that one night with Zarathustra has justified a lifetime of unremitting misery. Can one night really be worth an eternity in hell? Instead of representing a speculative possibility, the doctrine of eternal recurrence is meant to shame those who venerate Christ from afar by daring them to take on his power to destroy death. To redeem graves and awaken corpses is to will the eternal recurrence of one's own death as the key to eternal life.[24]

And yet, for all of that, the identification of Zarathustra with Christ is far from Nietzsche's last word. Christ is tortured and crucified in the end, whereas at the conclusion of Nietzsche's work a swarm of doves and a roaring lion lead Zarathustra on to new adventures. Freed of pity, he takes leave of disciples who in any event have already shifted their attention to worship an ass. The ass, of course, is Jesus, who has "taken upon himself the likeness of a slave."[25]

Just as the lion is not an ass, Zarathustra is not Christ. The lion roars and the clowns and buffoons who awakened Zarathustra's pity promptly disappear. In their place, Zarathustra senses the coming of his proper children.[26] As a mythic hero, it is his task to inspire a new generation to a life of courage. If Christ spoke to a world of the downtrodden, oppressed by powers towering over them, Zarathustra speaks to a world of social equals, oppressed by their own need to conform. Recalling his youth when, softhearted, he looked out with tears to a world filled with too much sorrow, Zarathustra conceded that he once saw things as Christ saw them. But Christ died too early. "He himself would have recanted his teaching had he lived to my age!" Immature youth is not yet ready to affirm life and the earth. Only those who are sufficiently mature to have recovered their innocence ("there is more child in the man than in the youth") are able to embrace life, come what may. If a child loses its innocence by learning of death, those who are old and wise have a chance to recover it by overcoming their fear of death. To love the earth is to love one's decomposing body.

If Christ was softhearted like charcoal, Zarathustra is the one grown hard like a diamond.[27] To tame the monster-god, one must begin by confronting him face to face. This is no easy task. Semele, the all-too-human mother of Dionysus, burst into flame when she viewed Zeus in his full divinity. Her body was engulfed by fire when, sinking into her death, she gave birth to the son of the greatest of the gods.

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[22] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 166-69, 294-96, 326.
[23] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "The Intoxicated Song," 326.
[24] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 178, 329.
[25] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "The Awakening," 321.
[26] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 334.
[27] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 231.

Zarathustra's hardness shows the presence of the god in him who was born out of the maximum of pain. What Christ had to suffer on the cross, Dionysus suffered in his birth. If Christ speaks to anxious souls, Dionysus speaks to those who, revering their tortured ancestors, have an intuition of how much pain they can bear.

Nietzsche, of course, was just a man, human, all too human. Aware of his own fragility, aware of his desperate loneliness, he sought to die to himself, in order to be reborn in spirit—as Zarathustra. In memory of the father who abandoned him as a child by collapsing into insanity and death, Nietzsche spent decades writing at fever pitch, trying hard to ward off his own insanity and death. But his fate was to relive his father's life. This is eternal recurrence.[28]

Eternal recurrence is both hell and comedy. Out of fear of enemies who must be stopped, we drop our bombs and create new enemies. Out of fear of discomfort, we build combustion engines and coal-burning electric plants capable of changing the climate of the entire earth. Dionysus is the god who erupts into laughter. He is not Christ shedding tears for suffering humanity but laughs even at tragedies.[29] Not a malign devil, he much rather an old rogue like Mephistopheles.

The real devil is the Spirit of Gravity, those stern guardians of morality who are intent on rooting out monsters.

Zarathustra merges with Dionysus only after he has laughed away his last glimmer of pity. As Dionysus reawakened, he laughs at everything. As Euripides reported in the *Bacchae*, he does indeed look with a cold eye on suffering. Pentheus was his cousin. The women of Thebes were his aunts. But Dionysus destroyed them all without pity or remorse.

But this is not all. Perfection does not go unpunished. The most moving passage in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is the *Night Song*, the melancholy lament of one who needs no one. "This is my solitude that I am girded round with light … I drink back into myself the flames that break out of me … oh wretchedness of all givers! … Oh craving for desire! Oh ravenous hunger in satiety … A hunger grows out of my beauty … Many suns circle in empty space: to all that is dark they speak with their light—to me they are silent."[30]

The heavens love the earth. The diamond glimmers against the softness of flesh. In the icy solitude of Dionysian perfection, the will to Christ was born. Nietzsche himself collapsed into insanity with his arms around the neck of a beaten horse. It is here, on the other side of his doctrine, that we find Nietzsche's real meeting place with Schelling.

When Zarathustra, in the very opening of Nietzsche's prologue, cried out to the rising sun, "What would your happiness be, if you had not those for whom you shine,"[31] what was at stake was more than the desire to go down into the valley to spread his wisdom to those who live there. What was really at stake was his desire for

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[28] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 228.
[29] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "Of Reading and Writing," 68.
[30] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "The Night Song," 129-30.
[31] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "Prologue," 39.

the friendship of an equal. This is something that, despite all the disciples who followed him, he never attained. Nietzsche might have done better by Zarathustra, if he had learned all he could have learned from Schelling. For it was Schelling, not Nietzsche, who took up the question of what friendship might mean for a god.

III

In Part One of his two-part 1811 *Ages of the World*, Schelling reminded us that what is first revealed to us is simply the brute force of nature itself, generous in what it brings forth and pitiless in what it then takes away.[32] Following the trajectory of nature into the advent of consciousness, he described an ever-spiraling swarm of tensions and obsessions and drives that emerge eternally from the most primitive either/or of "is or is not" until they erupt into full-fledged Dionysian madness, God and universe indistinguishable from one another, everything competing with everything else for space, existence, duration: an infinite surge of random nodes of energy, competing forces that swirl together into what Nietzsche towards the end of the century called the "will to power." Indeed, a passage from Nietzsche's *The Will to Power* suffices to summarize Schelling's text:

> And do you know what "the world" is to me? Shall I show it to you in my mirror? This world, a monster of energy, without beginning, without end; a firm, iron magnitude of force that does not grow bigger or smaller, that does not expend itself but only transforms itself; as a whole, of unalterable size, a household without expenses or losses, but likewise without increase or income; enclosed by "nothingness" as by a boundary; not something blurry or wasted, not something endlessly extended, but set in a definite space as a definite force, and not a space that might be "empty" here or there, but rather as force throughout, as a play of forces and waves of forces, at the same time one and many, increasing here and at the same time decreasing there; a sea of forces flowing and rushing together, eternally changing, eternally flooding back, with tremendous years of recurrence, with an ebb and a flood of its forms; out of the simplest forms striving toward the most complex, out of the stillest, most rigid, coldest forms toward the hottest, most turbulent, most self-contradictory, and then again returning home out of this abundance back into the simple, out of the play of contradictions back to the joy of concord …. this, my Dionysian world of the eternally self-creating, the eternally self-destroying, this mystery world of the twofold voluptuous delight, my "beyond good and evil" … *This world is the will to power—and nothing besides!*[33]

[32] Schelling, *The Ages of the World (1811)*, trans. Joseph P. Lawrence (Albany: SUNY Press, 2019). In the introduction to the translation, I provide a full account of what is at stake here.
[33] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §1067, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1968), 545.

For Nietzsche, the intent was to anoint a new generation of thinkers with the strength to live in the full intensity of the real, thus unveiled. The difficulty of doing this is what underlies the construction of idealistic fantasies that are nihilistic in a twofold manner: (1) they are based on the denial of reality as it is given us, as if this is something that can be swept away and replaced with a better, more just world; and (2) they crystallize into moral codes that justify the punishment and at times the savage torture of whomever is judged to have violated them.

For Schelling, the issue is more complicated. An idealist himself, he does not simply will the eternal recurrence of the same. That said, he criticizes in the same way Nietzsche does the idealisms of Kant and Fichte, which proceeds from the self-constituted ego and not from nature. Hegel's idealism, which widens the span to include the socially-constructed ego, fares no better. For here too nature has been abandoned. Idealisms so conceived are at bottom simply nihilism. Given that nature for Fichte is no more than a reserve to be used up, a barrier to be overcome, Schelling is right in saying:

> Such a complete nothing of reality is the *prius* for Herr Fichte: for the purity of knowledge, it is already a hindrance that anything at all exists, that the eternal is actually real and only *after* it really is, is it there as something to be known … for him, it would be better if it did not exist at all so that the knowledge of it would be pure and truly a priori (SW VII: 108).[34]

As for Kant's version of "radical evil," Schelling recognizes that inasmuch as it posits an utterly unconditioned and hence unforgivable assertion of the "free will," it has an unforgiving regime of punishment as its necessary correlate. Here he is in complete agreement with Nietzsche's observation, already cited, that the doctrine of will has been invented for the purpose of punishment.[35] One suffers a calamity and, knowing that one did not will it oneself, decides that someone else must have willed it, in very much the same manner as when people of old went searching for witches with their evil eye. What Nietzsche, the philosopher of the will to power, rejects when he critiques the idea of will is clearly not the will as such, but instead the castrated will of moral righteousness, whether that be the imagined bad will of bad people or the similarly imagined good will of people who deem themselves holy by the simple act of declaring themselves so. And what Nietzsche subsequently explained in terms of *ressentiment*, Schelling explained in terms of an idealism shorn of its ground.[36] The will

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[34] Schelling, *Darlegung des wahren Verhältnisses der Naturphilosophie zu der verbesserten Fichteschen Lehre* (1806). For an assessment of how Schelling's philosophy of nature represents a challenge to the entire ethical-teleological fantasy that has poisoned the contemporary university I know of no work I would more heartily recommend than Iain Hamilton Grant's *Philosophies of Nature after Schelling* (London/New York: Continuum, 2006).

[35] Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 63.

[36] I discuss this issue at length in "Schelling's Metaphysics of Evil," in *The New Schelling,* (London/New York: Continuum, 2004), 167-189. Only by resituating the source of evil in the ground of reality as such, including the ground of God, does Schelling render it *forgivable* and thus compatible with a regime of love. This is his answer to Kant. It is an answer we need to draw from if we are to effectively challenge

as such always has us in its control much more emphatically than we could ever have it in our control.

The self-positing will of Kant and Fichte, those great moralists, is sheer fantasy. This is the common critique of Schelling and Nietzsche that leaves us now to wonder what we are to make of the proximity this reveals. How close does Schelling's grounded version of idealism bring the two thinkers together? Is there a Christianity with no place for *ressentiment*? If so, how does one get to it—and how might it itself accomplish what hitherto has been accomplished only by the sainted few, those seemingly impossible commands to "love thy enemy" and "resist not evil." Achieving such inner strength, are the children of God to be thought of any longer as sheep who need the watchful eye of a beneficent shepherd—or will they not be supermen and superwomen united not in shared adoration of anything that towers above them, but instead in mutual respect, unmediated by anything resembling either idolatry or ideology?

To answer these questions, I have begun by observing what so many commentators have already observed: Nietzsche's animosity towards Christianity did not entail an animosity towards Christ. He himself could identify all too easily with the Crucified One. Even so, he did not follow Hölderlin and Schelling in any easy identification of Dionysus with Christ.[37] Dionysus may find himself stretched out on a cross, but instead of shedding tears for suffering humanity, he simply laughs at the absurdity of it all.

Suffering, we should concede, is for both Schelling and Nietzsche given to us not for our humiliation, but for our self-overcoming, our joyous participation in the life of the one who dispenses it. Christ/Dionysus is the resurrection and the glory, the eternal joy of becoming that "encompasses *joy in destruction*."[38] It is for this reason that Christ struggled with legalism—and the hypocrisy that legalism breeds—just as Nietzsche later took up the same struggle. Suffering paid back in kind is suffering unredeemed. It is for this reason that Nietzsche would have us "mistrust all in whom the urge to punish is strong!" It is for this reason that his highest goal was to overcome the spirit of revenge.[39] Even the Pharisees themselves are to be forgiven, despite all of their hypocrisy, all of their potential for cruelty. "The good," Nietzsche observed, "*have* to be Pharisees … the good *have* to crucify him who devises his own virtues!"[40]

Recognizing the necessity with which not only the criminal is a criminal but the Pharisee is a Pharisee, we see all that was at stake in Christ's greatest

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the neo-puritanism and implicit fascism of contemporary virtue signalers and social warriors. No purist will advance the cause of social justice an iota. Adolf Eichmann made his appeal to Kant, not to Nietzsche. The banality of evil is the comic earnestness of its crusade against demons that do not exist in pursuit of a good that is pure fantasy.

[37] Hölderlin accomplishes this most beautifully and succinctly in his elegy *Brot und Wein* (*Bread and Wine*). Schelling's version is far more expansive, comprising as it does all four volumes of the *Philosophy of Mythology* and the *Philosophy of Revelation*.

[38] Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 120.

[39] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "Of the Tarantulas."

[40] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "Of Old and New Law-Tables," § 26.

accomplishment, which was to cry out, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do" (Luke, 23:34), the ultimate overcoming of the spirit of revenge.[41]

As to Schelling's understanding of the same thought, one need only reflect on his notion that we all share a common birth in the dark ground. What this means is that we all have the same inclinations, the same conflicting wills to both affirm and deny life. It is not just that we all have committed adultery in our hearts, but, in fits of anger, we have committed murder as well. Indeed, in moments of despair, we all have followed Satan in wishing that the world itself had never existed. As Dostoevsky has the saintly Zosima put the matter, "Each of us is guilty before everyone and for everything, and I more than any of the others."[42] The saint is the one who, like Christ, has borne all the sins of the world. In other words, the saint is the one who knows what it is to have been created from the dark ground. It is his knowledge that makes Dostoevsky's Zosima more guilty than others, just as it is the fulness of the self-conquest that this knowledge facilitates that makes him a saint. As much contempt as Nietzsche had for Christians, he still venerated saints.[43] The path to the superman begins with a going under that, as much as it might be hidden by pride and sanctimony, is universally human. Because he sees the potential for the best of us in the worst of us, Zarathustra is a prophet of love just as much as Christ was a prophet of love. "Man is a rope, fastened between animal and Superman—a rope over an abyss."[44] Even cowards are worthy of love once one acknowledges their sensitivity towards the abyss, a sensitivity that keeps them sheltered in their cocoons. With love actually delivered, even they would fly up to meet their destinies.

Exactly these two things form the premise of Schelling's *Philosophy of Revelation*. What Nietzsche so often calls the "going under," Christianity has called *kenosis,* placing it at the very center of the being that is Christ. Equal to God, he yet subjected himself to lowly birth and crucifixion on the cross. As to who it was that made this sacrifice, who it was that humbled himself to be born as a mortal, Schelling's answer is clear: *Dionysus*. The dismembered god is himself the god with the axe. Cronus devours his children, until finally, a child emerges that he loves, the son who transforms the monster-god Cronus into a loving father. The angel of Jehovah peers up out of the face of Isaac: "Take the lamb, not the boy." The time of violence is over, the day of love has begun. Or, as Schelling says, apropos Dionysus: "the mild one was nothing other than the wild one; or rather the one who was first wild and horrific became in time mild and benevolent."[45]

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[41] Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, § 35.

[42] Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990), Book VI.

[43] This is implicit throughout in *Zarathustra.* More explicit statements can be found in *Beyond Good and Evil* ("What is Religious?" § 51) and the entire Third Essay of the *Genealogy of Morals*, especially Section 17, where asceticism serves both as proof of Christian nihilism and as proof of the possibility of self-overcoming.

[44] *Zarathustra,* "Prologue," §4, 43-44.

[45] "Der milde war nicht ein anderer als der wilde, sondern derselbe, der erst wilde und grausame wird in der Folge zum milden, wohlwollenden" (SW XIII: 470).

In one of Nietzsche's poems, Dionysus announced himself as Ariadne's labyrinth. If so, who was Schelling, if not Ariadne in pursuit of Dionysus, first emergent as the wild, but there, where the labyrinth finds its end, finally revealed as the mild? Or for that matter, perhaps he was Dionysus in pursuit of Ariadne, worthy of his love precisely because she says, "I will not roll over for you like a dog, but will only be yours, mighty hunter, like a beast in the wild."

Regardless of who was chasing whom, Schelling in the end left us with an extraordinarily detailed map of the labyrinth itself, the four massive volumes that make up his *Philosophy of Mythology* and *Philosophy of Revelation*. The entire mythological and theogonic process is, for Schelling, the movement, the coming to be, of the one god Dionysus. When Christ said, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58), he was doing nothing other than stating his identity with Dionysus, an identity that any one of us could lay claim to, if only we had the capacity to think that deeply. This vision, reminiscent of Giambattista Vico, is the basis for an ecumenical understanding of Christianity that has strong roots in the Epistles of Paul (the evangelist who reached out to gentiles). It does not yield its real fruit, however, until a future of Christianity is attained that Schelling likens to the Church of John, a church that is emphatically—not a church. Christianity becomes all-inclusive, according to the *Philosophy of Revelation,* only when it becomes fully compatible with atheism or, in other words, when it becomes fully secular.[46]

As for the completed vision, it takes the form of a complex theory of potencies, that is ultimately as straightforward as the movement from past to present to future. We emerge into a world that is initially defined by the self-enclosure of being, a world in which everyone mistrusts everyone, finding refuge first with family and friends but then finally under the protection and partial enslavement of the state. But the state too represents no more than a makeshift solution. The state's monopoly of power still has to be broken, a break that would entail a rupture more radical than the rupture between the Hobbesian state of nature and the rule of law.

This hope announces itself, as any true goal must, in the form of a dream, the dream that a time will come when everyone will love everyone, so that love will no longer be the familial and tribal love that always serves as the pretext for war. The condition for the fulfillment of the dream is—here we go back to Nietzsche—the final overcoming of the spirit of revenge. Saints are those who live in completed time, those who realize that hatred is never the proper instrument for achieving a world without hatred.[47] Accepting the inevitability of savages living among them, understanding that what renders them savage is the intensity of their desire for a better world, the Schellingian/Nietzschean saint knows that salvation has always already been achieved. This is what has to be communicated without sowing further divisions. It is a goal lofty enough to sustain Dionysus through countless deaths and

[46] Sean McGrath, *The Philosophical Foundations of the Late Schelling: The Turn to the Positive* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021).

[47] For a remarkably prescient little essay, of renewed interest in these days of "woke" social warriors, see the epilogue to Leszek Kolakowski's *Modernity on Endless Trial* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 255-262.

rebirths, eternal recurrence of the same as the emergence of the always unprecedented, on countless stars in countless heavens, but always in the spirit of a joy that knows the end of the story even while it knows why the story can never be completed.

Eschatological completion, even now, is available to all who understand it. Contemporary bureaucrats of diversity will abandon their offices in fear and trembling once the storm winds that create true diversity blow open the company doors. Thus Schelling, thus Nietzsche. A great awakening, not to the "wokeness" of an already fixed doctrine, but to an acceptance of human beings as they are, remains an ongoing human possibility. What we are today is not what we have to be tomorrow.

IV

By way of epilogue, let me now turn to Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, which, as Manfred Frank has shown,[48] contains the only passage that directly connects Nietzsche to Schelling. Before entering into it, it is worth noting how Schelling's understanding of Apollo and Dionysus differed from that of Nietzsche. A few short years before Nietzsche undertook his investigation of the origins of Greek tragedy, Schelling's *Philosophy of Mythology* and *Philosophy of Revelation* were posthumously published by Schelling's son to be assiduously worked over by Nietzsche's elder colleague Johann Jakob Bachofen, himself a former student of Schelling. It is Bachofen who, even more than Burkhardt (another student of Schelling) has been credited with providing the young Nietzsche with the basic elements of his theory.

It was in the *Philosophy of Revelation* that Bachofen discovered Schelling's pithiest formulation of the relationship between Dionysus and Apollo:

> The secret of the truly poetic is to be both drunk and sober, not in different moments but in one and the same moment. This is what distinguishes Apollonian enthusiasm from the merely Dionysian (SW XIV: 25).

Apollo is not, as Nietzsche had it, a god who stands opposed to Dionysus from the outside. For Schelling, there are no gods outside of Dionysus. Apollo is Dionysus, risen to self-mastery. Self-mastery is the principle of divinity that is revealed in all genuine art. Michelangelo and Mozart were both guided by Apollo, just as long before them both Homer and Socrates were guided by Apollo. Nietzsche's critique of Socrates as somehow too "Apollonian" has to be reconceived in the light of Schelling's understanding that Apollo has Dionysus alive inside of him.[49]

But this is what Nietzsche could have learned from Schelling, but did not. What he did learn, however, is equally interesting and, in the end, surely leads to the

[48] Manfred Frank, *Gott im Exil* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989)55-58. The relevant texts are Section 10 of Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* and Lecture 21 of Schelling's *Philosophie der Offenbarung* (in particular SW XIII: 481-484).

[49] This was the underlying premise of my *Socrates among Strangers* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2015).

same place. For the passage that reveals actual influence is the passage in which Nietzsche depicts the Dionysus of Greek Tragedy as "Zagreus," the primordial Dionysus whose dismemberment first brought forth earth, water, air, and fire. The passage was borrowed almost word for word from the first volume of Schelling's two-volume *Philosophy of Revelation*. What underscores its importance was that Nietzsche then went on to depict Dionysus's rebirth first as "Bakchos" (the familiar god of wine and intoxication) and then as the god "Iakchos," the *Dionysus yet to come*. The Trinity itself was a common enough motif in German Romanticism. What tied Nietzsche's version directly to Schelling, and only to Schelling, however, was Nietzsche's assertion that the entire world "torn asunder and shattered into individuals" would in the end experience the joy of Demeter, who "sunk in eternal sorrow," learns that she is to give birth anew to her lost daughter, but this time not as the physical deity locked in the darkness at the center of the earth, but as Dionysus-Iakchos—pure spirit in which separate individuals can be reunited in love, even while, as in a successful marriage,[50] they remain independent personalities all their own.

So where are we? The god of the beyond is dead, just as Nietzsche said he is dead. After Copernicus, the universe can only be comprehended as having no borders. It can no longer be conceived as if it were enclosed by a celestial sphere dividing the beyond from the within; all that is left is infinitely more of what we have here. The iron cage that was erected to substitute for the missing god, refuge for cowards who are afraid to sleep under the open sky, is itself without mooring. The state will only ever seek to extend its power over the individual. So too the steady growth of capital, a compulsion only conceivable within a post-Copernican conception of the cosmos.

But this, the celebration of a greed that need not be limited insofar as, once it has devoured the earth, it can turn outward to the stars, is in fact based on an illusion. True, there is no outward limit. The universe, it would seem, does extend forever.

But there is an internal limit. We die. Our capital might grow and grow (God forbid that horror), but we ourselves must die.

And all that we accomplish by kneeling before the new idols of politics and technology and ever-growing capital, is to empty the world of meaning, for meaning is constituted only within the horizon of death. In the compelling word of Nietzsche, "the desert grows." The earth turned into money, the future itself traded for money, and knowledge pursued solely for the sake of refining our instruments, so that the machines we build are fed on the life blood of our people. And all without rhyme or reason.

Yet, paradoxically enough, clarity grows where darkness grows. The delusions of ideology are rendered more and more transparent as the battle for power shows itself for what it is, a macabre game of musical chairs in which the highest goal left for humanity is that oppressors and oppressed might finally trade places, with new lords to lord it over the old lords, until finally it is the head not only of Danton, but of the great Robespierre himself, that falls with a thud in the basket. The

[50] Christiane Singer, *Éloge du mariage, de l'engagement et autres folies* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2000).

redistribution of power accomplishes nothing as long as moral certitudes fill the void once occupied by the ever-vengeful god. The spirit of revenge that lurks in the secular quest for justice is the shadow of the dead God. But when those certitudes themselves collapse, what then? Who but the living God, Dionysus breathing life into the all, could possibly fill that void? The third Dionysus, the god we still await, is the god no longer of tragedy, but of love. This was Schelling's contribution to the philosophy of Nietzsche. Only in that hope will we get beyond our obsession with making the guilty pay. For where the guilty must pay, we all go to hell. In the spirit of forgiveness, the gates of hell swing open and Dionysus makes his return. And where Dionysus returns, political divisions fall away and humanity finally comes together. What else, really, has there ever been but that to hope for?

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In the Name of the Future: Prophecy as Critique in Schelling and Tillich

Maximilian Hauer

Schelling and the State

My goal in this paper is to show how the question of the future in Schelling can be a starting point for a political reading of his metaphysics. Since the 1960s, German Schelling researchers like Jürgen Habermas and Hans-Jörg Sandkühler have repeatedly reiterated their critical judgment that "Schelling is not a political thinker."[1] When we look at Schelling's work, it quickly becomes apparent that political philosophy in the narrower sense occupies a very small space in it.

However, the judgment mentioned above is not primarily founded on the low number of pages devoted to the issue. The problem runs deeper than that. Schelling neglects the political sphere because his account of this aspect of the human being is deeply pessimistic. This pessimism makes him transcend the sphere of the political in favor of other layers of reality. Already in his 1800 *System of Transcendental Idealism,* the problem of contingency is at the root of Schelling's doubts concerning the progressive course of political history (see SW III: 584f., 597ff.).[2] These concerns arise even more urgently in Schelling's later development. By introducing the concepts of evil, sin, and the fall into his metaphysics, Schelling's account of human history

[1] Jürgen Habermas, "Dialektischer Idealismus im Übergang zum Materialismus—Geschichtsphilosophische Folgerungen aus Schellings Idee einer Contraction Gottes," in *Theorie und Praxis. Sozialphilosophische Studien,* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1971), 172. Hans Jörg Sandkühler, *Freiheit und Wirklichkeit. Zur Dialektik von Politik und Philosophie bei Schelling* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1968), 10, 27, 33, 149.

[2] See F. W. J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism (1800)*, trans. Peter Heath (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia), 196f., 206ff.

seems to become overall bleak. Human nature after the fall is conceived as deeply distorted. Humans are now ruled by egoistic self-will and therefore a new form of life emerges which is "false, a life of mendacity, a growth of restlessness and decay" (SW VII: 366).[3] This sick form of life is shaped by the (auto-) destructive competition of egoistic, self-centered individuals. The unity of humankind has vanished.

Under these conditions of corrupted human nature, the state is the necessary means to re-establish an external unity amongst these antagonistic selfish atoms (see SW VII: 460ff.).[4] The state is a physical force to prevent the complete dispersal of humankind into chaos. However, the unity guaranteed by the state always remains particular, deficient, and precarious. The state can never be the organ of completion of human personality in institutionalizing relations of recognition. It is a necessary expression of alienation, not the means of overcoming it.

While some of Schelling's remarks on the state are harsh, he certainly has no inclinations towards anarchism. Quite the opposite: the state is the futile yet justified endeavor to establish a merely formal unity, forged with the help of force and violence (see SW XI: 553).[5] Schelling does not believe in the possibility of shaping the state beyond its core function, and condemns ambitions to establish a political state according to ideals of reason as hubris (see SW XI: 546ff.).[6]

Various scholars from a Post-Hegelian and Marxist backgrounds, like the ones aforementioned, have subjected this theory of the political to fierce criticism. Habermas speaks of the "positivism" of late Schelling,[7] thereby denouncing Schelling's acceptance of any existing political authority and its exemption from critique and justification. Hans-Jürgen Sandkühler adds to this by pointing to what he calls the "derealization" of history in Schelling.[8] According to Sandkühler, Schelling abandons the perspective of mundane progress in favor of a metaphysical construction of decay. This construction renders profane human action insubstantial and ephemeral because it has no impact on the fundamental occurrences that take place between God and humankind, such as creation, the fall, and redemption. In this view not only does Schelling have no political philosophy, as Habermas put it, he is a staunch advocate of "anti-politics" as Sandkühler has it.[9]

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[3] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom,* trans. Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006), 34.

[4] Schelling, "Stuttgart Seminars," in *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory: Three Essays by F.W.J. Schelling,* trans. and ed. Thomas Pfau (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 226ff. This conception of the state is Augustinian in its roots. See Ernst Cassirer, *Der Mythus des Staates. Philosophische Grundlagen politischen Verhaltens* (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1985), 143ff.

[5] See Schelling, "Lectures 22-24 of the *Presentation of the Purely Rational Philosophy,*" trans. Kyla Bruff, *Kabiri* II (2020): 122.

[6] See Schelling, "Lectures 22–24 of the *Presentation of the Purely Rational Philosophy,*" 117ff.

[7] Habermas, "Dialektischer Idealismus im Übergang zum Materialismus," 176.

[8] Hans Jörg Sandkühler, "Geschichte und Entfremdung. Zur Differenz des Hegelschen und Schellingschen Systems oder Hegels Kritik der konterrevolutionären Entwirklichung der Geschichte und ihrer Philosophie," in *Hegel-Jahrbuch 1968/1969*, ed. Wilhelm R. Beyer on behalf of the Hegel-Gesellschaft (Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1970), 107–122.

[9] Sandkühler, *Freiheit und Wirklichkeit*, 33. For a sympathetic account of Schelling's anti-politics, see André Schmiljun, *Zwischen Modernität und Konservatismus. Eine Untersuchung zum Begriff der Antipolitik bei F.W.J.*

Mythology and Judaism

We do not understand Schelling's abstinence from politics if we think of him as a resigned cynic who accepts the pathologies of egoism as a given feature of human nature. Furthermore, we shouldn't confuse his lack of interest in politics with classical Greek intellectualism, which retreats from the imperfection of finite being in favor of a contemplation of eternal, ideal essences (see SW XI: 558ff.).[10]

Schelling does not treat alienation as a general feature of human existence but rather as a historical experience. Therefore, alienation does not have the final say in Schelling's theory. By reflecting on the beginning of alienation in a historical deed, we can also imagine an end of it (see SW XII: 38). However, we have not reached this end yet; reconciliation is not the present state of affairs, but a hope for the future. While Schelling does not concede progress in political history, where powers wax and wane, he clearly embraces the idea of a new being that would transcend the present stage of alienation. The appearance of the new in history, however, seems to be detached from political history—we have to look for it in the relation between humankind and God. This decisive relationship is documented in the history of mythology and revelation.

In his *Historical-critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology,* Schelling understands mythology as a form of religious belief that fits perfectly well to the human condition after the fall. The fall alters human nature, the relations within humanity, and the religious consciousness, that is to say, the human relation to God. This deed also leads to the dissolution of humankind into different peoples, with different languages and particular gods, i.e., it instigates the mythological process.

Now, instead of a united humankind, there are distinct people separated by different religious obligations. In this period, consciousness is tormented by the rule of different gods, powers of being that gain control over humans, who cannot distance themselves from them (see SW XI: 18f.).[11] Humans take these forces as a given, their power over the human mind emerges in an unconscious, necessary way (see SW XI: 245f.).[12] Mythology reflects a stage of total immanence, unconsciousness, and fear.

Against the backdrop of this desperate situation, Schelling highlights the special meaning of Judaism for the religious history of humankind. Its role is to preserve the remembrance of the old, unified God in an epoch when humankind is

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Schelling (1775–1854) (Berlin: Dissertation at Humboldt Universität, 2014), http://edoc.hu-berlin.de/dissertationen/schmiljun-andre-2014-11-03/PDF/schmiljun.pdf.

[10] See Schelling, "Lectures 22–24 of the Presentation of the Purely Rational Philosophy," 125ff. With reference to Schelling, Paul Tillich further elaborates on the difference between Greek intellectualism and Christian existentialism in his essay "Philosophie und Schicksal," in *Philosophie und Schicksal. Schriften zur Erkenntnislehre und Existenzphilosophie,* Gesammelte Werke vol. IV, ed. Renate Albrecht (Stuttgart: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1961), 23–35.

[11] Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, trans. Mason Richey and Markus Zisselsberger, with a preface by Jason M. Wirth (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), 17f.

[12] See Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, 170f.

torn into the succession of mythological gods. By clinging to that old God, they also commit to a state of unified humankind, with one religious commitment. Correspondingly, national particularism is closely linked with polytheism (see SW XI: 100ff.).[13] Judaism remains the *representative* of humanity in the state of humanity's objective dissolution (see SW XI: 159f.).[14] Therefore, Judaism is at odds with the new order of things in the mythological era, a "non-nation" ("*Nichtvolk*") (SW XI: 156)[15] and an alien in the world of particular nations.

We might now suppose that Judaism is solely a conservative force for Schelling, as it remains loyal to the God of the origin that the other nations have abandoned. However, according to Schelling, Judaism transcends the seemingly eternal world of mythology in a twofold way. It is not only rooted in tradition but also directed forwards, towards a future that will transcend the current mythological state of human affairs.

The different names of God in Judaism express this complexity.[16] God is not only "the Almighty," "The Master of Heaven and Earth," or the "god, *who always was*." In the course of history, he also reveals himself as the true God, the God coming into being. This is the meaning of the Name Jehovah, as it was revealed to Moses in the desert: "I will be who I will be" (SW XI: 171).[17] We have to understand God as "he who is in the future … who now is only becoming, who *will* be in the future" (SW XI: 172).[18] Therefore, Judaism truly is "the religion of the future" (SW XI: 171).[19] Within Judaism, though, "the actual and proper principle of the future is set in the realm of prophets" (SW XI: 174).[20] Prophetism is the determined institution that preserves a staunch orientation towards the future. The prophets cultivate the hope of a coming salvation that transcends the status quo of the present straits. All the pledges this God gives concern the future; all he gives are promises. The content of these promises is

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[13] See Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, 73ff.

[14] See Schelling, *Historical-critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, 112f.

[15] Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, 111, translation modified. In his research on the semantic structure of modern anti-Semitism, Klaus Holz has shown that the figure of "the Jew" usually functions as a "figuration of the third" (*Figur des Dritten*), a misfit in the modern world of nation-states. This means that within the logic of anti-Semitism, "the Jew" is not just a representative of *another* nation, but rather an elusive figure that runs counter to the whole *category* of the modern nation-state. See Klaus Holz, "Der Jude. Dritter der Nationen," in *Die Figur des Dritten. Ein kulturwissenschaftliches Paradigma*, ed. Eva Eßlinger, Tobias Schlechtriemen, Doris Schweitzer, Alexander Zons (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010), 292-303. Schelling, too, sketches Judaism as a figuration of the third. However, he does not share the negative and hateful judgments of anti-Semitic agitation. This is because Schelling does not support the division of humankind into different nations. On the contrary, he envisions overcoming national divisions and a reunification of humankind e.g., in his discussion of Pentecost in the *Historical-Critical Introduction* (SW XI: 108f.).

[16] For Schelling's discussion of these various names and their meaning, see *Historical-critical Introduction,* 113ff. (SW XI: 160ff.).

[17] Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, 120. Gunnar Hindrichs has recently suggested an interesting political reading of this name of God in his book *Philosophie der Revolution* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2017), 314f.

[18] Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, 120.

[19] Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, 120.

[20] Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, 121.

not a position of power for the Jewish people, Schelling emphasizes, but rather the reunification of all the scattered nations (see SW XI: 172).[21]

Paul Tillich on Prophecy and Socialism

In his theory of politics, Paul Tillich provides an original transformation of Schelling's principle of prophecy. Schelling's work had a deep impact on the German theologian and philosopher from early on, before World War I. His 1910 doctoral thesis dealt with the question of late Schelling's construction of a history of religion.[22] In the 1920s, Tillich not only developed the outlines of his systematic theology, but also intervened in the public discourse of the Weimar Republic as a dedicated and politically committed intellectual. He had a formative influence on religious socialism and published numerous articles in favor of a dialogue of socialism and Christianity.

While Tillich had written extensively on eschatology, prophecy, and religious socialism throughout the 1920s and 1930s, this engagement peaked in his 1933 monograph, *The Socialist Decision*, which the National Socialist regime confiscated immediately after its publication. This repression came as no surprise considering the thesis of the book. *The Socialist Decision* criticizes fascism and liberal capitalism alike and passionately promotes religious socialism as the only truly human alternative to the contemporary crisis of capitalist society.

While other socialists explained the emergence of fascism by reference to the economic structure of capitalism and the interests of certain factions of capital, Tillich chose a completely different approach. He situates contemporary ideological struggles in a broad speculative narrative that comprises the whole of human history. The metaphysical roots of this universal history lie in the very nature of human beings.[23]

According to Tillich, what structures human history is the antagonism of two distinct principles: mythology and prophecy. Both principles reflect different aspects of human nature. For human being is not just some sort of "being" that is identical with itself ("*Sein*"), but of a duplicate nature, conscious being ("*bewusstes Sein*").[24] This feature gives us the capacity to understand and fulfill ethical demands as well as the capacity to ask questions about ourselves and others. Furthermore, we can reflect on our situation in the world and realize that we owe our existence mainly to exterior forces. Naturally, an existential question arises: "Where do I come from?"

Mythology gives an answer to that question. Mythology is a consciousness of the powerful *origins* of being and the veneration of these forces: We belong to and owe our existence and our identity to kinship and earth, i.e., blood and soil, as well as traditions, authorities, or established social groups. Every myth is essentially a tribute to some kind of origin. Mythology conceives humans as standing in continuity with

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[21] Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, 120f.

[22] Paul Tillich, *Die religionsgeschichtliche Konstruktion in Schellings positiver Philosophie, ihre Voraussetzungen und Prinzipien* (Breslau: H. Fleischmann, 1910).

[23] See Paul Tillich, *Die sozialistische Entscheidung*, preface by Klaus Heinrich (Berlin: Medusa Verlag, 1980), 16-34.

[24] See Tillich, *Die sozialistische Entscheidung*, 21.

these sacred origins. Humans stem from the origins, owe their power to the origins, and go back into the origin when they die—this is the eternal cycle of life and death, growth and decay. Where the cycle dominates the cultural imagery, space rules over time.[25] According to Tillich, mythological thought entails a specific political commitment: it is the basis for conservative and romantic politics.

Nevertheless, there is a second aspect of human nature: the experience of consciousness, question, and demand. From here arises a second existential question: "To what end?" The dimension of ought and shall transcend the cycle of mere being. It breaks the absolute power of the origin in the name of an absolute yet still unrealized demand. The demand aims at something that does not yet exist but should exist in the future—Tillich calls this the absolute demand of justice. Here, time rules over space. This question is represented by a certain religious principle too: the principle of prophecy. Again, this religious principle is the basis for certain political forces.

By claiming that the Jewish Prophets were the first to question mythological authorities in the name of future justice, Tillich follows Schelling's account. However, Tillich puts much more emphasis on the fact that this eschatological striving for a just future implicates severe social conflicts. The orientation towards a radically different future cannot leave the present social order unchallenged. Consequently, the prophets fought against society's bonds to the soil. They devaluated aristocracy and kingship, nationality, and the ritual traditions guarded by a caste of priests. The Old Testament is a book of universal meaning precisely because it questions Jewish national traditions, and in the name of universality and justice contains a critical dynamic of self-transcendence.

Another crucial difference between Schelling's account of prophecy and Tillich's appropriation lies in the historical range of the concept of prophecy. For Schelling, prophecy is a distinct phenomenon of the past, it occurs in the ancient history of the Jewish people. What is more, the hopes, expectations, and promises of the Old Testament prophecy are fulfilled with the Christ event (see SW XI: 177f.).[26] For Tillich, however, prophecy is a principle that is not yet exhausted. Jewish prophecy is but the first realization of a dynamic principle in history.[27] This principle is sufficiently potent to critically transcend its own manifestations. Therefore, there were several consecutive realizations of it throughout the history of Christianity. Tillich interprets Protestantism as an expression of the prophetic principle because it subjected all the traditions, hierarchies, and mythological remnants of the Catholic Church to criticism.[28]

Tillich's extension of prophecy does not stop here. Both, Catholic and Protestant churches have largely lost their prophetic character during the last

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[25] For this particular aspect, see Paul Tillich, "Der Widerstreit von Zeit und Raum," in *Der Widerstreit von Zeit und Raum Schriften zur Geschichtsphilosophie* Gesammelte Werke vol. VI, ed. Renate Albrecht, Hildegard Behrmann (Stuttgart: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1963), 140–148.
[26] See Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction*, 124f.
[27] See Tillich, *Die sozialistische Entscheidung*, 22f.
[28] See Tillich, *Die sozialistische Entscheidung*, 49.

centuries.[29] They became hierarchical institutions closely connected to the ruling authorities. Hardly any true expectation of the coming Kingdom of God on earth still lives in them. Salvation and fulfillment are now private issues that only concern the individual soul and will not alter the social order and being in general.[30] In this situation, the principle of prophecy now realizes itself beyond Christian religion.

According to Tillich, the most important contemporary manifestation of prophecy is the socialist movement.[31] Socialists experience the present as torn, alienating and unjustified.[32] Within their circles, humans still live in the expectation of the radically new, a new order of being. They live in hope for a future that will be more just and fulfilling. This is why Tillich calls socialism prophetic in its substance.

At the same time, Tillich describes the fascist powers of his time as deeply committed to mythological powers of all kinds. They deify blood, soil, and social authority and imagine humans as fully determined by these (supposedly) natural forces. In addition, they pit their own particular belonging against that of other "races," thereby cultivating war and oppression and denying the demand of universal justice. Therefore, the contemporary confrontation between fascism and socialism has its predecessors in the fight between mythology and monotheism.

Tillich's reading of the late Schelling offers us a starting point for a political reading of Schelling's philosophy. Tillich picks up Schelling's distinction between mythology and prophecy, and creatively transforms them into a powerful conceptual framework for political theory. This framework allowed him to not only to critically interpret his era but also to intervene in the political debate on the eve of the rise of fascism in Germany. As authoritarianism and ethnocentrism gain traction around the globe again, Tillich's insights into the dangers of political mythologies are indispensable for orientation in our own times.

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[29] See Tillich, *Die sozialistische Entscheidung*, 87.

[30] See Paul Tillich, "Eschatologie und Geschichte," in *Der Widerstreit von Zeit und Raum. Schriften zur Geschichtsphilosophie.* Gesammelte Werke vol. VI, ed. Renate Albrecht, Hildegard Behrmann (Stuttgart: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1963), 77. See Jacob Taubes' similar diagnosis of the devaluation and individualization of eschatology within the history of Christianity: *Abendländische Eschatologie,* with an appendix by Jacob Taubes, (München: Matthes und Seitz, 1991), 71ff.

[31] See Tillich, *Die sozialistische Entscheidung*, 85–94. Tillich is far from being the only German intellectual in the first half of the 20th century to demonstrate what Michael Löwy has called the "Elective Affinity" of (Jewish) eschatology and socialism. See Michael Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia: Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe: A Study in Elective Affinity*, trans. Hope Heaney (London: Verso, 2017). However, as Tillich is a renowned Schelling scholar, who integrated Schellingian thoughts in his work, his contribution to this broad discourse of "anti-capitalist romanticism" (Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia*, 23) is of particular interest.

[32] See Tillich, *Die sozialistische Entscheidung*, 57.

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Xavier Tilliette on Revelation as the Measure of Reason: Toward a Christological Philosophy

Tyler Tritten

Xavier Tilliette, born in Sommes, France in 1921, passed away on 10 December 2018 at the age of 97.[1] Although he first gained notoriety for his many studies of

[1] As a teenager, Tilliette joined the Society of Jesus as a novice in 1938 and became a priest around age 30 in 1951. Academically, he received a degree in Philosophy, Theology, and Classical Arts in Grenoble in 1943 and a second degree in German in Lyons in 1946. The following year he was appointed Professor of Philosophy at the Jesuit School St. Louis de Gonzague in Paris, where he taught Phenomenology, Modern and Contemporary Philosophy from 1947–1949 and 1954–1957, with these appointments sandwiching his initiation into the priesthood. Beginning in 1961 and ending in 1966, he also taught at the Studium Theologicum in Chantilly near Paris as well as at the Jesuit Centre Sèvres in Paris. Only in 1969, in his late 40s, did he obtain a PhD in Philosophy from the Sorbonne. In 1993 he was also awarded a PhD in Theology *honoris causa* in Naples. His dissertation, approaching 1,200 pages in length, was on F.W.J. Schelling and was published as two volumes a year later with the title *Schelling: une philosophie en devenir* [*Schelling: A Philosophy in Becoming*]. This immediately made him the preeminent Schelling scholar in France, with Jean Louis Viellard-Baron even deeming him "the most significant Schelling specialist in the world" ("Die Christologie der Ungläubigen. Vom romantischen Jesus zur Spiritualität im Gegenwartsroman," in *Vernunft und Glauben: ein philosophischer Dialog der Moderne mit dem Christentum*, ed. Steffen Dietzsch & Gian Franco Frigo (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2006), 72). In 1969, the same year he received his PhD, he became Chair of History of Modern and Contemporary Philosophy, a post he held until 1987, at the Institut Catholique of Paris. During this time and later, 1972–2000, he also held a Professorship in the Faculty of Philosophy at the Pontifical Gregorian University of Rome. He was eventually granted Emeritus status at both these institutions. It is additionally worth mentioning that he held numerous posts as a Visiting Professor in Italy, Germany, France, Spain, Portugal and the USA. Concerning lifetime achievements, he has received multiple awards, e.g., the Prix de l'Académie Française, the Humboldt Medal, an award from the Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften and an award from the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques. Three academic volumes have been collected in his honor, the first in Italy, the second in Germany and the third in France. Finally, he served as a consultant for the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*.

Schelling,[2] he has also published numerous books and articles on other figures in philosophy and theology, e.g., Karl Jaspers, Edmund Husserl, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, G.W.F. Hegel, Maurice Blondel, Paul Claudel, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Gabriel Marcel, Jules Lequier, Henri de Lubac and Vladimir Jankélévitch, amongst others.[3]

Apart from his work on Schelling, Tilliette may best be known for his work on philosophical Christology,[4] which means that he has much to say about the relation between theology and philosophy as well as between faith and reason. It is surely for this reason that he was selected as one of the consultants for the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*.

This study—the first of a two—which will hopefully spark an interest in Tilliette's thought for English-speaking thinkers—will critically reflect upon what Tilliette has to say about the relation between (1) revelation and history (and thus between eternity and time), and (2) faith and reason (and thus between theology and philosophy). Concerning the latter pairing, it is, for Tilliette, not primarily a question of how faith might be demonstrated or, more humbly, simply explicated philosophically, i.e., through reason, whereby faith would be passive and reason active, but it is rather a question of how revelation can act upon reason, which would now be the one playing the role of passive handmaiden. More precisely, how can revelation, by which Tilliette principally means the incarnation of the Messiah, expand the borders of philosophy? To speak Schellingian, how does revelation bring about an 'ekstasis of reason? 'The aim, however, is not to proselytize, but merely to show how the purview of reason can be enlarged and the borders of philosophy expanded by means of 'theological givens.' The operative assumption is thus that the domain of reason alone is too narrow to speak of the empirical, i.e., of 'facts, 'religious or

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[2] In addition to his dissertation—*Schelling: une philosophie en devenir* [*Schelling: A Philosophy in Becoming*] (Paris: Librarie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1992)—Tilliette also published three other books on Schelling]: (1) *La mythologie comprise: l'interprétation-Schellingienne du paganisme.* [*Mythology Understood: The Schellingian Interpretation of Paganism*] (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2002), (2) *Une introduction à Schelling* [*An Introduction to Schelling*] (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2007) and (3) *Schelling: Biographie* [*Schelling: A Biography*] (Calmann-Lévy; 1999) as well as a number of articles. None of the books have been translated into English..

[3] All told, Tilliette's academic publications exceed 2,000 in number with some of these, early in his career, even being on cinema, as he served as a film critic.

[4] Tilliette published four books on philosophical Christology: *La christologie idéaliste* [Idealist Christology] (Paris: Desclée, 1986); *Le Christ de la philosophie: Prolégomènes à une christologie philosophique* [The Christ of Philosophy: Prolegomena to a Philosophical Christology] (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1990); *Le Christ des philosophes: Du Maître de sagesse au divin témoin* [The Christ of Philosophers: From the Master of Wisdom to Divine Witness] (Namur: Culture et Vérité, 1993); *Qu'est-ce que la christologie philosophique?* [What is Philosophical Christology?] (Collège des Bernardins: Parole et Silence, 2013). The second, which is the most extensive treatment, was published in France in 1990, but was translated into German in 1998 as *Philosophische Christologie: Eine Hinführung* [*Philosophical Christology: An Introduction*], trans. Jörg Disse, (Freiburg i.B.: Johannes Verlag). While Tilliette's work has garnered a fair degree of renown in France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Portugal, due to a lack of translations of any of his books into English, his work remains unknown and uncommented upon in the Anglophone academic world. With respect to his work on philosophical Christology, this author is aware of only one relevant article that has been translated, "Trinity and Creation," trans. Sarah Donahue, *Communio: International Catholic Review* 28, no. 2 (Summer 2001). There are, to my knowledge, no relevant pieces of secondary literature at all, though some articles are misleadingly published with English titles despite being composed in Italian.

otherwise, that could not possibly be known *a priori* and so can be known by no other means than 'revelation.' Specifically, it will be shown how the Messianic event, i.e., the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, can broaden academic borders, not just for theology but also for philosophy.

What Revelation Does to Philosophy

"The problem is not the following: how Christology must be depicted in order to satisfy the requirements of philosophy, but rather how philosophy has to present itself in order to correspond to the requirements of Christology."[5] If, as Tilliette here suggests, philosophy must adhere to dictates set by Christology, then it is because Christology does not merely offer philosophy some content about which to think, but, more than that, it alters philosophy: it delimits the claims philosophy can make and judges claims it already does make. Tilliette, always with concrete instances in mind, provides at least three ways in which revelation, i.e., the 'fact' of the Christ-event, exerts an active influence on philosophy: transubstantiation, free creation, and the interpenetration of time and eternity. It will be useful, however, first to explain what a fact is and how the Christ-event, which, to repeat, is always shorthand for the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, could be treated as a fact. In other words, an explanation of why revelation, *if* it is, is necessarily factical must first be offered.

"The simplest conceivable philosophical access to Jesus Christ, i.e., with the least pitfalls," Tilliette confesses, "seems to be the acceptance of his historical existence, of his words and of his teaching."[6] This, however—the Messiah's teachings and miracles, the words and deeds of the historical figure of Jesus—is decidedly *not* the revelatory fact, the fact of Jesus as *the Messiah*. Like the Apostle Paul, who has next to nothing to say about the so-called 'historical Jesus,' rather deigning to know nothing but "Christ crucified," it is the personhood and *being* of Jesus that constitutes the fact of the revelation. The fact under question, then, does not primarily involve epistemological problems concerning historical knowledge, though these cannot be excluded, but it is a question concerning an *ontological* fact. In other words, it is an inner fact at least as much as it is a fact that requires external, historiographical, verification.

Appealing to the "masterful beginning"[7] of Schelling's *Darstellung des philosophischen Empirismus* [*Presentation of Philosophical Empiricism*], Tilliette proffers that

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[5] "Das Problem lautet nicht: wie muß sich die Christologie darstellen, um den Forderungen der Philosophie zu genügen, sondern wohl eher: wie hat sich die Philosophie zu präsentieren, um den Anforderungen der Christologie zu entsprechen." Xavier Tilliette, "Ist eine philosophische Christologie möglich?," in *Probleme und Aspekte der Fundamentaltheologie* (Leipzig: St. Benno-Verlag, 1985), 169–187: 186.
[6] "Der einfachste, mit den wenigsten Fallstricken versehene philosophische Zugang zu Jesus Christus, scheint die Annahme seiner historischen Existenz, seines Wortes und seiner Lehre zu sein." "Ist," 173.
[7] Xavier Tilliette, "Die 'höhere Geschichte'," in *Schelling, seine Bedeutung für eine Philosophie der Natur und der Geschichte: Referate und Kolloquien der Internationalen Schelling-Tagung Zürich 1979*, ed. Ludwig Hasler (Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1981), 193–204: 193.

"a fact is in no way something objectively present or superficial."[8] This does not mean that a fact cannot be objectively present, but objective presence is not that wherein its facticity lies. Facts—as Martin Heidegger similarly taught of 'phenomena'—are hidden, principally because they exceed reason. A fact, in other words, is something that cannot possibly be known *a priori*, but only and insofar as it is 'given, 'yet, as will be argued, givenness is equally irreducible to a sense datum, to the *a posteriori*. If the term 'revelation 'might already be prematurely used to designate the givenness of the given, then a fact is something that can be known *only* if revealed. There is, for example, absolutely no possible knowledge of the fact of gravity apart from the falling of bodies. Subsequent to this sense-event, reason and speculation will enter the scene to posit a supersensible law or mechanism as well as its mathematical formulation to account for this given, but only, as it were, 'after the fact. 'In short, reason always does its work too late to account for the facticity of a fact, i.e., its quoddity, although it can account for a thing's quiddity and provide the mathematical formula correspondent to its operation. Rather than appeal to gravity, however, Tilliette follows Schelling's example, that of a book.

> Another analogy offers the simple presence of a book: paper and letters are echoes of the same; only understanding discloses the authentic work; the fact is spirit and thought. We are not accustomed to observe a book as a fact, but rather as a thing, but it depends on the intention: a fact is everywhere a puzzle that should first be developed before we can point to it.[9]

A fact (*Tatsache*) is neither the objective thing (*Ding*) nor the superficially positivistic, i.e., sensible, fact of the matter (*Sache*) because the matter (*Sache*) depends on something inner, like a free deed (*Tat*), hence a fact is a *Tat-sache* (the 'act of the matter'). Said differently, all *factum* is based in *actum*. This is that to which Tilliette is alluding when he says that "it depends on the *intention*." Intention (*Absicht* is not the same as intentionality) is always intention to will, intention to act, and only an act can account for a fact's facticity, i.e., quoddity, while reason can only ever approach a fact's essence or quiddity. Reason always proves insufficient in the face of facticity. Additionally, it should hopefully already be obvious why facts are not simply 'things ' or 'objects, 'lest there could be no such thing as, for example, political facts. In light of a political fact or before the fact that another has acted, one asks "What happened? What did I just see?" The (f)act of the matter is clearly not reducible to a sense datum. Tilliette confirms, "The external appearance is valid merely as a hint and indication."[10]

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[8] Tilliette, "Höhere Geschichte," 193.

[9] "Eine andere Analogie bietet die einfache Gegenwart eines Buches: Papier und Buchstaben sind Schalle desselben, das authentische Werk eröffnet nur das Verständnis, die Tatsache ist Geist und Gedanke. Wir sind nicht gewohnt, ein Buch als eine Tatsache zu betrachten, eher als sein Ding, aber es kommt auf die Absicht an: die Tatsache is überall ein Rätsel, die erst erschlossen werden soll, bevor wir auf sie hinweisen können." Tilliette, "Höhere Geschichte," 194.

[10] "Die äußere Erscheinung gilt bloß als Wink und Hinweis." Tilliette, "Höhere Geschichte," 195.

This is just as, for Schelling, Tilliette observes, "Mythology is an inner, 'ecstatic 'history … that first passes over into actual history through a real fact [*wirkliches Faktum*], through the reception and birth of Christ."[11] Schelling's philosophy of mythology and his notion that a proper understanding of the history of mythology is a necessary prerequisite for a proper understanding of Christian revelation cannot here be discussed, but one can at least glean that Tilliette picks up on the notion that the relationship between *Tatsache*, which has to do with will and deed, and historical facticity involves the transition from inner or *eternal* history to time.

Drawing on rhetoric from Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, Schelling sees that reason, only able to account for quiddity, has a negative function, while actual existence or facticity is the positive. On this basis he, as Tilliette elsewhere confirms, sketches "positive philosophy as a superior empiricism."[12] It is safe to say that Tilliette borrows these notions from Schelling. If deeds, or at least divine deeds, are wrought in eternity but bear temporal, i.e., historical, effects, then a genuine empiricism that concerns itself with the facticity of facts, i.e., with the will (or principle) that brought them about, can speak of the supersensible and the eternal. Theology, then, which is concerned with a supersensible God who only acts eternally, yet effectuates salvation history within time, is a science of the fact; theology is an empirical science, a higher empiricism. Tilliette is always quick to acknowledge and privilege "the grandeur of the Fact, and singularly the Fact of Revelation, by which reality imposes itself and which would not be able to be anticipated *a priori*—and correlatively the impotence of rationalisms to bring themselves to the rank of the Fact."[13] Moreover, he holds that he does this to a higher degree than Schelling himself, remarking, "[Schelling] pretends to save the autonomy of philosophy. The same principles, in effect, hold sway over negative philosophy and positive philosophy."[14] If the same principles hold sway over both domains, then Tilliette's suspicion is that Schelling still lets philosophy operate *too* autonomously, because the fact of revelation has obviously not caused any real alteration in the principles that are operative in negative, i.e., purely rational, philosophy. For Tilliette, however, reason does not merely receive its content from the fact, but reason is judged and altered by the fact.

To recapitulate:

a. Facts are not knowable *a priori* but also, qua supersensible, not properly knowable *a posteriori*, i.e., as a mere sense datum. In this sense all facts are only

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[11] "Die Mythologie ist eine innere, ‚ekstatische' Geschichte … die erst durch ein wirkliches Faktum, durch das Empfängnis und die Geburt Christi, in wirkliche Geschichte übergeht." Tilliette, "Höhere Geschichte," 199.

[12] Tilliette, *La mythologie comprise*, 57.

[13] "La grandeur du Fait, et singulièrement du Fait de la Révélation, dont la réalité s'impose et qui ne saurait être anticipe a priori–et corrélativement l'impuissance des rationalismes à se hisser à la hauteur du Fait." Xavier Tilliette, "Du dieu des philosophes au dieu des chrétiens," *Archivio di filosofia* (1969): 469.

[14] "Il prétend sauve garder l'autonomie de la philosophie. Les mêmes principes, en effet, régissent la philosophie négative et la philosophie positive." Tilliette, "Du dieu," 469.

knowable as revealed, in the general rather than special sense of the term 'revelation.'

b. A fact is an internal phenomenon that only has *being*[15] (as well as only being knowable) in and through its effects or external results. The internal and the external are inextricable. There are no falling bodies without gravity and vice versa. There is no book without letters and vice versa. There is no will without an intended effect and vice versa. In this sense, one might say that a fact is that which both institutes the division and corresponding bond between the internal and external.

c. Facts have a meaning. In other words, facts have intentions (which are not necessarily conscious and known) or, minimally, operative laws or principles at their base, even if such can only be known in the fact's external result.

d. Deeds are facts, which are thus only known historically and *if* a person reveals their will. Here one sees the traditional theological problematic concerning the relation of eternity and time come to the fore the most prominently. A deed's effects, essential for the constitution of the identity of the will or deed, may incur a delay from the act of will, just as the eternal will of God may only be revealed through salvation history.

e. The facticity of a fact is unaccountable by reason. Reason, unable to begin on its own (i.e., contra Tilliette's Schelling-based understanding of Hegel, unable to begin as a logic by making itself into its own content), only has an object of analysis if one is given to it from elsewhere, i.e., apart from its own deductions. Reason, then, is confronted with various positivities or 'givens' (which are not equivalent to sense data) that impose upon reason the task of thinking them, of measuring up to them, including religious positivities like revelation in the special sense, e.g., Christian revelation, the incarnation and resurrection of the Messiah.[16] Reason cannot thus dismiss religious or revelatory claim's *a priori* or out of hand. Contra David Hume, not even an account of a miracle can be dismissed as impossibly containing epistemic warrant prior to investigating the (f)act of the matter.

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[15] One commentator of Tilliette does well to stress that given the emphasis on facticity, the ontological problematic must be one of reality rather than one of ideas. The reality—assumed or negated—of the Messiah decides what is essential. "It is not the idea of the divine, or even the idea of God, but the encounter or the failing of a person who is at the heart of philosophy [Ce n'est pas l'idée du divin, ou même l'idée de Dieu, mais la rencontre ou le défaut d'une personne, qui est au cœur de la philosophie]." Bertrand Saint-Sernin, "Un Peintre Chrétien," in *Philosophie, Théologie, Littérature : Hommage à Xavier Tilliette, SJ pour ses quatre-vingt-dix-ans*, ed. Miklos Vetö (Louvain: Éditions Peeters, 2011: 48).

[16] Tilliette writes, "The proper reflection of philosophy on its essence and its history (self-questioning constitutes part of philosophy) drives it ineluctably toward a confrontation with religion, and singularly with positive religions that resist integration [La propre réflexion de la philosophie sur son essence et son histoire (l'autoquestionnement fait partie de la philosophie) la conduit inéluctablement à la confrontation avec la religion, et singulièrement avec les religions positives, qui résistent à l'intégration]." Tilliette, *Le Christ des philosophes*, 11.

f. Finally, facts set the standard by which reason will be measured; reason cannot measure facts. Facticity is the ultimate criterion of truth, while reason only sets the criteria of validity.

Concerning this last point, one commentator on Tilliette has written, "God must be thought because he gives himself to be thought. In this sense, Christian theology needs philosophy."[17] Tilliette claims more though. It is not just that facts provide reason with something to think, whereby reason would receive this content neutrally as though it would not be altered by facts, but facts judge thought, sometimes condemning it for not living up to the standard set by the fact. This commentator does better, then, when he affirms that for Tilliette "philosophy does not lead to Christ, but with him . . . finds its point of departure."[18] That facts are, in this sense, 'normative' does not mean, however, that everything claimed as a fact really is a fact. One could still be an atheist or non-Christian. Facts are debatable (which is quite a different thing from affirming an 'alternative fact'). If facts are not simply brute but have a meaning—there is no fact-value distinction—then to debate the meaning of a fact is tantamount to debating the fact itself. This is why two people can share the exact same sense data, yet one can state that it is a fact that a revolution is taking place and the other can ask, "What revolution?" Likewise, before the phenomenon of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, one can affirm that there is, in fact, a law at play here, but not one accessible to or predictable for humans. One could also, however, rather affirm not uncertainty but *indeterminacy* as the fact observed, i.e., that there simply is no lawfulness in effect here because spontaneity or contingency is a real principle of the universe.

If the Christian revelation, the life and death of the Messiah, is possibly a fact, then in what ways would it alter and judge philosophy rather than just being neutrally received as content for philosophy to think through? Three concrete examples were enumerated above: transubstantiation, free creation, and the interpenetration of time and eternity. These will soon be treated in turn, but first a brief negative propaedeutic. The scope of reason must be delimited further still so that it can be more precisely seen why reason is not the measure of things but is rather that which is measured. Tilliette furthers Kant's tribunal of reason, albeit in a rather un-Kantian way, showing not just that reason is measured and finite, but that, consequently, it cannot be its own measure; it cannot enact its own tribunal. Accordingly, one has not necessarily committed any epistemic violations in proclaiming a revelatory event, e.g., Jesus the Messiah, even if one is speculating further than reason alone can go. It is precisely *because* reason is limited that one is authorized to proceed further than principled,

[17] "Gott muß gedacht werden, weil er sich selbst zu denken gibt. In diesem Sinne bedarf christliche Theologie der Philosophie." Werner Wedler, "Gedanken von Schiffbrüchigen …'—Anmerkungen zu Xavier Tilliettes ‚Philosophischer Christologie' aus protestantischer Sicht," in *Vernunft und Glauben: Ein philosophischer Dialog der Moderne mit dem Christentum*, eds. Steffen Dietzsch & Gian Franco Frigo (Berlin: Akademie Verlag: Berlin, 2006): 47.

[18] "Daß die Philosophie nicht zu Christus hinführt, sondern bei ihm … ihren Ausgangspunkt findet." Wedler, "Gedanken," 43.

Kantian skepticism would allow and to speculate freely. This is because, contra Kant, reason cannot enact its own criticism, but is judged by facticity, which is other than reason. We simply cannot remain within the bounds of reason alone.

As Tilliette suggests, in what could perhaps be a veiled criticism of Anselm of Canterbury, Baruch Spinoza and/or Hegel, "The passage from the rational to the supra-rational is not automatic. Reason is not destined, of itself, to transition to a 'superior domain.'"[19] Reason is not self-grounding, which means it cannot account for its own facticity. As Schelling has asked, "The entire world lies, as it were, ensnared within the nets of reason, but the question is: How has it come into these nets?" (SW IX: 142). Additionally, though, reason is not self-transcending, i.e., there is no "passage from the rational to the supra-rational." If reason begins only with itself, then it ends only with itself. There is no transition from logic to fact, from validity to truth. For Tilliette, this insuperable breach is enough to found the possibility (without yet affirming the actuality) that Christian revelation can be a real fact. He exclaims, concerning Christological problems, "Their center of gravitation is the possibility of a Revelation. For this it is enough to justify a necessarily unfinished, but coherent, construction."[20] That a system is open rather than closed, that its construction is unfinished and probably unfinishable, for which it would suffice that it is not self-grounding, is enough to found the *possibility* of affirming the incarnation and resurrection of the Messiah as a fact. On this basis alone, one has not necessarily committed any epistemic violations in proclaiming a revelatory event, e.g., Jesus the Messiah, even if one is speculating further than reason alone may venture.

Having shown (1) that reason, though valid, is not self-grounding and so, as it were, can provide no proof of completeness, and (2) that a Christology can be internally coherent, Tilliette is in a position to make two more claims. The first follows from the fact that, as incomplete, reason is ecstatic or opens onto, albeit without mediation or imminent transition, something in excess of itself. "It is this surplus, this excess, that which is inexhaustible for thought, that a Balthasar, with his 'absolute Christology,' opposes to the intrusion of a reason that is searching for its prey."[21] Reasoning that searches for prey is a reasoning that judges would-be facts because it falsely believes that it sets the standard against which facts must be measured rather than vice versa. The second claim positively affirms the 'normative 'quality of a proposed fact, in this case the incarnation and resurrection of the Messiah. This fact, should it prove actually to be one, would set the standard against which reason will be measured rather than vice versa. "The incarnation is insurmountable, an indelible referent, otherwise there would be a desire to attain to what is revealed without the

[19] "Mais le passage du rationnel au supra-rationnel n'est pas automatique. La raison ne se détermine pas d'elle-même à transiter au 'domaine supérieur.'" Tilliette, "Du dieu," 470.

[20] "Leur centre de gravitation est la possibilité d'une Révélation. C'en est assez pour justifier une construction forcement inachevée, mais cohérente." Tilliette, *Qu est-ce que*, 13.

[21] "C'est ce surplus, ce surcroit, l'inépuisable pour la pensée, qu'un Balthasar avec sa 'christologie absolue' oppose à l'intrusion d'une raison cherchant sa proie." Tilliette, *Le Christ des philosophes*, 477.

Revealed One."[22] Reason, confronted with its own incompleteness, cannot first desire that something be revealed to it, but this desire is instead first produced only once reason has already been confronted with, nay, traumatized by, the Revealed. The object of revelation does not, so to speak, meet reason's desire to have something to think, but reason is first inspired to actual thought only once it has been encountered by a hitherto unaccountable fact.

It is from this place, then, beginning with the 'normativity' of the fact, that Tilliette is able to corroborate those larger and more sweeping claims he promises at the beginning of his books on Christology. For instance,

> It is Christ who interrogates philosophy, who calls out its pretentions, thereby also 'disturbing 'it. The question of Christ—Who do you say that I am? Who does one say that I am?—equally addresses philosophers. He not only interrogates philosophy, but, in the end, he judges it.[23]

To temper this, however, one must also note a certain restriction. "To remove every equivocation: this legitimate philosophical Christology is the work of a confessional philosopher; it resides on the support of Christian philosophy…. It supposes more than an agreement, an interaction between philosophy and theology."[24] This is more than a mere agreement, because it is not two autonomous domains that just happen to be in accord. They are rather only in accord because faith or the confessional aspect plays the predominant role. The work of philosophical Christology, i.e., of bringing Christology into harmony with philosophy, revelation into harmony with reason, is the work of faith, the work of a confessor. Christology is necessarily an article of Christian philosophy. A Muslim, Jew or atheist would likely not get far off the ground. The principle, then, is that faith and reason are conciliatory but not coincidental; there is no elision of one into the other.

Tilliette acknowledges the danger of making each coincide with the other. "The risk, in effect, is to absorb philosophy and its wisdom into piety, into the

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[22] "L'incarnation est insurmontable, un référent indélébile, sinon ce serait vouloir atteindre du révélé sans le Révélant." Tilliette, *Le Christ des philosophes*, 475.

[23] "C'est le Christ qui interroge la philosophie, qui l'interpelle dans ses prétentions, là aussi il est celui qui 'dérange'. La question du Christ: Qui dis-tu que je suis? Qui dit-on que je suis ? s'adresse également aux philosophes. Non seulement il interroge la philosophie, mais en définitive il la juge." Tilliette, *Le Christ des philosophes*, 11.

[24] "Pour lever toute équivoque: cette christologie philosophique légitime est l'œuvre du philosophe croyant, elle repose sur l'appui de la philosophie chrétienne…. suppose plus qu'une entente, une interaction, entre la philosophie et la théologie." Tilliette, *Le Christ des philosophes*, 471. See also, "Christian philosophy … is destined, in principle, to make the bed of philosophical Christology. If the center of Christianity is Christ and his unique message, then philosophical Christology must be at the center of Christian philosophy [La philosophie chrétienne … est destinée par principe à faire le lit de la christologie philosophique. Si le centre du christianisme est le Christ et son message unique, alors la christologie philosophique doit être au centre de la philosophie chrétienne." Tilliette, *Qu'est-ce que*, 27.

devotion of Christ."[25] On the one hand, the confessional philosopher is saved from fragmentation, finding herself neither obliged nor inclined to separate the Messiah of faith from the historical personage of Jesus of Nazareth, but, on the other hand, she risks doing more than just acknowledging that philosophy is not autarkical and self-engendering, but she risks letting philosophy be annexed into confessional theology. That philosophy might serve as handmaiden to theology is one thing. That it would have no other function is quite another thing. In any event, though philosophy may not be the exclusive trove of confessional theology, Christology is not just something that can be thought by philosophy, but it alters and judges philosophy. There is not only philosophical Christology, but also 'Christological philosophy. 'Concretely, Tilliette exhibits this by showing (1) how transubstantiation critiques substance ontology; (2) how the notion of the creation of the world provides the indispensable conditions for free creativity as such; and (3) how any philosophy of freedom must account for the relationship between eternity and time, a traditionally theological notion.

Three Exemplars

The theological notion of transubstantiation is not merely but one piece of a *summa theologica*, it is a piece that can alter the understanding of the whole of reality, thus transforming notions in cosmology generally. Tilliette develops this line of thought primarily through his reading of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Blondel.
As David Grumett has argued,

> Père Tilliette shows how the Eucharist is not exceptional but exemplary. The presence of Christ in eucharistic substance, which the doctrine of transubstantiation describes, points to a larger metaphysical truth: that Christ sustains and gives consistency to other substances in the world, acting as the 'bond of substance.' Substance is not, in other words, mere extension in the Cartesian sense, but a theological and even Christological notion.[26]

It is not simply that the eucharistic notion of transubstantiation undermines the Cartesian notion of substance as *extensio*, but it also undermines the entire modern, philosophical notion of substance as something that exists through itself, i.e., without relations. In René Descartes there is no relation between thinking and extended substances, a problematic transmitted to John Locke, George Berkeley and Hume, just as in Spinoza there is no relation between substances at all because there is only one substance and in Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz substances are without relation because they have no windows. The modern notion of substance, then, is a discrete,

[25] "Le risque en effet est d'absorber la philosophie et sa sagesse dans la pitié, dans la dévotion au Christ." Tilliette, *Qu'est-ce que*, 17.
[26] David Grumett, "Christ as Substance in Teilhard and Blondel," in *Philosophie, Théologie, Littérature: Hommage à Xavier Tilliette, SJ pour ses quatre-vingt-dix ans*, ed. Miklos Vetö (Louvain: Éditions Peeters, 2011), 133.

isolated, self-enclosed, self-sufficient unit; substance is without (constituent) relations. More debatably, one might even argue that the notion of transubstantiation undermines the very notion of substance that runs throughout the whole of Western philosophy. Aristotle, although he does not deny that substances are altered and emerge through causal interactions with other substances, still ultimately closes substance up in autarkical *choriston*, 'that which exists apart. 'Consequently, although relations are not denied, it is still far from a relational ontology, and this seems to be the judgment that the theological notion of the eucharist pronounces upon the properly philosophical notion of substance.

The eucharist reveals the actual substantiality of substance; it offers the very condition of substantiality, 'the bond of substance' or, as Grumett further explains, "the bond which makes substantiation possible, the vivifying agent for all creation."[27] This should be reminiscent of Paul's claim that Christ is the one in whom and through whom we move and have our being. That 'in which we move and have our being ' also pronounces judgment on modern dualism. A transubstantiated element is neither reducible to mere *extensio* and *nor* is it pure thought. " The nature of Christ includes a '*universal physical reality*, a certain cosmic extension of his Body and Soul."'[28]

Finally, let it also be added that it is very strange indeed to denounce the notion of transubstantiation as absurd and magical, while accepting and even apologetically defending the incarnation. If that without a body and without matter can become embodied and human, then surely that which is already corporeal and material, bread and wine, can be transubstantiated into something else that is also corporeal and material.

A second way in which Christian revelation alters, judges and/or expands philosophical notions and solutions lies in the idea of free creation, a notion presumably foreign to pagan mythology and early Greek philosophy, which rather espoused a non-creative God (Aristotle),[29] demiurgic notions (Plato), the idea that the gods emerged from nature[30] rather than the inverse, or that reality is the unavoidable overflowing of a supereminent and superabundant nature (Plotinus). Aristotle's god perhaps creates nothing at all, only narcissistically turned toward itself (and so away from the possibility of another, the creation), the demiurge does not create *ex nihilo* but is only a craftsman, and the One of Plotinian Neoplatonism is perhaps incontinent, an unpreventable overflow or procession, even if Plotinus does temper this with an equally unavoidable return to the source.

The philosophical problematic that is really at stake here, though, the third exemplary way that revelation critiques and enlarges philosophical thought, is that of time and eternity. In this respect, more work is needed on the contemporary relevance of the debate between Proclus and John Philoponus concerning the eternity of the

[27] Grumett, "Christ as Substance," 134.
[28] Grumett, "Christ as Substance," 138.
[29] Tilliette infers, "The passage from Pure Act to Creative Act is far from self-evident." Tilliette, "Trinity and Creation," 299.
[30] See Hesiod, *The Theogony. Works and Days. (Loeb Classical Library)*, trans. Glenn W. Most (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018).

world.[31] If Philoponus insists on a 'time' between God's being alone in advance of the creation, it is because this interval is required for God's freedom, to ensure that there is not an immediate and necessary transition from the principle to the principled or from cause to effect. Surely, time *cannot* simply be the moving image of eternity. Modern philosophy knows full well that if there is no breach drawn between potency and act, but that if the movement *a potentia ad actum* is perfectly continuous or even contiguous, then the result is Spinozism, which Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi infamously spied as fatalism and, ultimately, atheism. This is not simply to side with Philoponus in this ancient debate. There may be a third path that accepts the eternity of the world, as Thomas Aquinas suspected, but not without drawing an equally eternal breach between God and the creation, hence Thomas thought of God's causality as non-univocal. The Hebraic Scriptures and the Kabbalist tradition too perhaps referred to this interstice as the co-eternal Wisdom of God, who played before God for all eternity. Tilliette, appealing to these traditions and citing from the apocryphal *Book of Wisdom*, posits, "The delight Wisdom brings the Creator, 'rejoicing always before him, 'implies the necessity, so to speak, of introducing a mediation, an intermediary, between God and his creation."[32] However conceived, it is only if the transition from the possibility of the creation to its actualization is not immediate, if there is an interstice, whether eternal or temporal in nature, that the creation can be free rather than incontinent, an unavoidable emanation. Time is also hereby no longer thought as the moving image of eternity, but as a surplus, an extra, a contingent addition to eternity.

If the Christian notion of free creation calls into question traditional ideas about the relation between time and eternity, then it also concerns the meaning of time, i.e., the meaning of history or, in theological terms, 'eschatology'. As Tilliette notes, commenting on the Christology of Michel Henry, "There is no philosophical Christology without eschatology because the effort speculatively to comprehend Christ implies a *state* that transcends the conditions of time."[33] Peter Henrici, commenting on Tilliette, states the effect theological notions drawn from revelation enact on philosophy. "The puzzles, which philosophical reflection on time uncovers, can perhaps ultimately be solved only on the basis of a Christology, a teaching of God in time. This solution is, however, no longer the task of the philosopher; he must cede this to theology."[34] While it may be too much to say that philosophy should retreat in

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[31] See Proclus, *On the Eternity of the World (de Aeternitate Mundi)*, trans. Helen S. Lang & L.D. Marco (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), and John Philoponus, *Against Proclus'* On the Eternity of the World, trans. Michael Share (New York: Cornell University Press, 2005).

[32] Tilliette, "Trinity and Creation," 297.

[33] "il n'y a pas de christologie philosophique sans eschatologie, parce que l'effort de comprendre spéculativement le Christ implique un *état* qui transcende les conditions du temps." *La christologie*, 378.

[34] "Die Rätsel, die ein philosophisches Nachdenken über di Zeit aufdeckt, können vielleicht letztlich nur auf dem Boden einer Christologie, einer Lehre vom Gott in der Zeit gelöst werden. Diese Auflösung ist jedoch nicht mehr Aufgabe des Philosophen; er muss sie der Theologie überlassen." Peter Henrici, "Der Philosoph und die Zeit," in *Philosophie, Théologie, Littérature : Hommage à Xavier Tilliette, SJ pour ses quatre-vingt-dix ans.* Ed. Miklos Vetö (Louvain: Éditions Peeters, 2011), 96.

silence by surrendering certain problems to theology, one can at least say that there are problems before which philosophy would necessarily fall silent were it not able to be informed and critiqued by theology and revelation. In one marvelous passage, Tilliette thus quips that "modern philosophy without the visitation of Christianity is reduced to a superior logic."[35]

It is precisely concerning the relationship between revelation and philosophy that Tilliette, despite the generally positive and largely ubiquitous influence otherwise enacted, is eager to critique Schelling. Tilliette bemoans,

> The grave reproach that one must make against Schelling is that he interprets the Christian phenomenon with the aid of principles and categories forged for other uses at the risk of evacuating the mystery and absolute novelty…. He rejoins the 'religion conceived 'of Hegel and proposes an alliance between Christianity and science…. What is said to be the office of philosophy, to comprehend everything, must be true even of religion![36]

If Tilliette learns of the incompleteness of reason and its impotency to deduce facts from itself from Schelling, then he finds it equally remarkable that Schelling does not let reason undergo any real alteration in form when confronted with the fact of revelation. Concerning the positive inheritance Schelling leaves for Tilliette, Marc Maesschalck remarks, "It is notably reason for which it is impossible for a rational philosophy to render 'comprehensible a free creation of the world.' This radical epistemological critique is at the basis of every partition of Schelling's last philosophy between positive and negative philosophy."[37] Philosophy, which begins not *with* knowledge but only with a 'wanting 'for knowledge, as Schelling is always quick to stress, must presuppose a non-rational (which is not equivalent to the irrational) and non-philosophical (which is not equivalent to the anti-philosophical) element. Why then does Schelling let reason stand unmoved before this, before facts that cannot be exhausted by reason? As Emilio Brito notices,

> [Schelling] seems to cross the boundaries of philosophy without so much as pretending to elaborate a dogmatics … he is conscious of not being able to

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[35] "La philosophie moderne sans la visitation du christianisme se réduit à une logique supérieure." Tilliette, *Qu'est-ce que*, 25.

[36] " Le reproche grave que l'on doit faire à Schelling, est qu'il interprète le phénomène chrétien à l'aide de principes et de catégories forges pour d'autres usages au risque d'en évacuer le mystère et l'absolue nouveauté…. il rejoint la 'religion comprise' de Hegel, et il propose une alliance du christianisme et de la science…. Que ce soit l'office de la philosophie de tout comprendre, même la religion, soit!" Tilliette, "Du dieu," 469f.

[37] "C'est notamment la raison pour laquelle il est impossible pour une philosophie rationnelle de rendre 'compréhensible une libre création du monde.' Cette critique épistémologique radicale qui est à la base de toute la partition de la dernière philosophie de Schelling entre philosophie positive et philosophie négative." (Marc Maesschalck, "L'engendrement du commencement selon Schelling: signification et enjeux d'une protologie de la conscience," in *Philosophie, Théologie, Littérature : Hommage à Xavier Tilliette, SJ pour ses quatre-vingt-dix ans*. Ed. Miklos Vetö (Louvain: Éditions Peeters, 2011): 299).

> deduce *a priori* the truth of Christianity…. In this way, he risks transforming into 'knowledge 'the historical deployment of the wisdom of God.[38]

Given that he correctly sees that Christianity cannot be rationally deduced, Schelling apparently errs in still affirming, or least risking, that reason transforms historical revelation rather than revelation transforming reason. Although, as Brito affirms, Schelling "has tested the limits of thought,"[39] Brito cannot help but emphasize a lingering ambivalence in Schelling.

> History finds its foundation in an unaccountable divine decision. But, the theological limit of this thought, even in his last phase, is to propose a kind of semi-rationalism, too inclined to insinuate that our reason can see into the game of God, conceiving *post factum* the depths of divine revelation.[40]

To draw a few conclusions, as Tilliette emphasizes, "Only a philosophy that profoundly modifies itself, that 'enlarges itself, 'or even changes its dress, can measure up."[41] Now, "under [Pauline] conditions"—as found in 2 Corinthians 10:5 and Colossians 2:8, which harshly denounce philosophical argumentation, and 1 Corinthians 1:18, which speaks of the "foolishness of the Cross," a stumbling block to Greeks who look for wisdom—"the idea of philosophical Christology appears absurd."[42] Tilliette does not deny these Pauline strictures. Nevertheless, he does want to subject theology, to a degree, to philosophy, but only in order to expose philosophy to judgment in light of the Fact of Revelation. Philosophy, left to itself, will falter, but if called into question, if critiqued and transformed by revelation, it can render a service to theology. Reason should play the role of handmaiden and auxiliary rather than that of arbiter and judge. As Wilhelm G. Jacobs argues, "Tilliette attempts to show how philosophical thinking is led to the form of Christ and thereby even to theology, and how both—as mutually completing—subsist alongside one another."[43]

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[38] "[Schelling] semble franchir les frontières de la philosophie, sans pour autant prétendre élaborer une dogmatique . . . . il est conscient de ne pas pouvoir déduire *a priori* la vérité du christianisme . . . . il risque ainsi de transformer en 'savoir' le déploiement historique de la sagesse de Dieu" (Emilio Brito, SJ, "Idéalisme allemand et théologie chrétienne," in *Philosophie, Théologie, Littérature: Hommage à Xavier Tilliette, SJ pour ses quatre-vingt-dix ans*. Ed. Miklos Vetö (Louvain: Éditions Peeters, 2011): 191).

[39] Tilliette ,"Idéalisme allemand," 192.

[40] "L'histoire trouve son fondement dans une décision divine indevançable. Mais la limite théologique de cette pensée, même dans sa dernière phase, c'est de proposer une sorte de semi-rationalisme, trop enclin à insinuer que notre raison peut voir dans le jeu de Dieu, concevoir *post factum* les profondeurs de la révélation divine." "Idéalisme allemand," 191f.

[41] "Seule une philosophie qui se modifie profondément, qui 's'élargit', ou même qui change de cap, peut y parvenir." Tilliette, "Du dieu," 468.

[42] "Unter diesen Bedingungen scheint die Idee der philosophischen Christologie absurd." Tilliette, "Ist," 171.

[43] "Tilliette versucht zu zeigen, wie das philosophische Denken auf die Gestalt Christi und damit dann auch auf die Theologie geführt wird und beides—sich ergänzend—nebeneinander besteht." Wilhelm G. Jacobs, "Laudatio auf Prof. dr. P. Xavier Tilliette S.J.," in *Berliner Schelling Studien 6: Festschrift für Xavier*

Alongside one another—this means that faith and reason are parallel or with (*con*) one another (con-ciliatory but not coextensive). Neither can be annexed to the other, neither devotion to analysis nor analysis to devotion. Faith and reason are thus not perfectly complementary, as they do not necessarily arrive at the same destination, but nor are they in conflict. Or, better, they are conciliatory, but without coinciding with each other. The truths of philosophy are not the truths of revelation and vice versa, even if these truths would also not be mutually exclusive.

This study has hopefully provided sufficiently concrete instances of how revelation for Tilliette critiques and alters philosophy, and how faith dictates to reason, rather than vice versa. The three exemplars discussed are (1) the theological notion of transubstantiation not as an exception to general ontological principles but instead as the exemplary instance of the 'flesh 'of the world as relational rather than substantial; (2) the Christian conception of free creation and the critique it enacts against Aristotle's impossibly creative God, the Platonic demiurge and the Plotinian conception of creation as an imminent, rather than contingent and free, overflow of superabundance; and (3) how theological discussion of the relation of eternity and time, divine will and history, can be employed to respond to apparent impasses in the philosophy of freedom generally. Having exhibited that and how revelation judges and expands the borders of philosophy, it is clear that any philosophical Christology is equally a christological philosophy, i.e., a philosophy, a general ontology, that has first learned from the fact of the revelation, namely, the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of the Messiah.

As a general principle, it could be said that what revelation does to philosophy, what faith does to reason, and what the Messiah does to the wisdom of the world is to enact a transvaluation of values. This transvaluation, however, is no more manifest than in the event of the Cross and, hence, in christological ruminations. How the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of the Messiah, however, most incisively enacts its judgment upon philosophy or the wisdom of the world more generally, remains to be discussed in a forthcoming article on Xavier Tilliette.[44]

Tilliette anlässlich der Verleihung der Humboldt-Medaille durch das Institut für Philosophie der Humboldt-Universität (Berlin: Total Verlag, 2006): 44.

[44] To be published in Kabiri IV (2022).

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F.W.J. Schelling, "On the Relationship of the Plastic Arts to Nature" (1807)

Translated by *Jason M. Wirth*

Translator's Preface

This is Schelling's most notable public address. Its length and difficulty prompt one to wonder how many of his audience were able to follow it, but it remains a seminal text to read and study, one that brings together in dynamic co-illumination two of the great strands of Schelling's early thought: his *Naturphilosophie* and *Kunstphilosophie*. Along with the turn to art in the 1800 *System of Transcendental Idealism* and the Würzburg lectures on the *Philosophy of Art*, it is Schelling's most important and memorable philosophical reflections on art. It is his most concise and unabashed defense of the genetic dynamism of art and its indispensability for human life. Although Schelling's call for a "revival" of a "thoroughly" and "peculiarly German art" went largely unheeded in Munich until perhaps *Der Blaue Reiter* collective in the early Twentieth Century, this address's provocative analysis of the "spiritual in art," was not only taken up, however indirectly, by Kandinsky in his book (*Über das Geistige in der Kunst*), but it remains current and worthy of engagement.

The standard German pagination for this text was established when this address was reprinted in 1860 in division 1, volume seven of Schelling's *Sämmtliche Werke*, edited by his son, Karl F. A. Schelling. To facilitate consultation with the original German, I have interpolated the standard pagination within the text. Schelling later inserted eight footnotes, some of which are short essays in themselves. The

occasional brevity between interpolated German page numbers reflects the fact that the lengthy footnotes occupy the same pages as the address itself.

I note here the difficulty in conveying the complexity with which Schelling deploys the German term *Wesen*. In common as well as philosophical parlance, this is rightly translated as *essence*. This custom presents a critical problem in this text, one that risks obscuring key elements of Schelling's argument. We have long become accustomed to detect in the word *essence* what the *form* of something is. Essence is *what* something *is*. We may even imagine, caught in the bad habits of Platonism, that essences are another name for the forms, which inhabit some eternal ideal realm until they impress themselves in time upon receptive matter. Schelling is quite clear that the *Wesen* is not the form of a being nor do either the *Wesen* or the form shape and configure pliable matter within the vicissitudes of time (i.e., individual exemplars come and go while the forms are eternal, always ready to stamp themselves upon matter anew). Schelling rejects this entirely.

For the *Wesen* to be, however, it must exist *as something*; it must express itself as a particular being. In that sense, the *Wesen* forms the being and thereby *affirmatively* expresses itself (not negatively restricts itself). To be a being, it must be *something*, but whatever being it is, being itself is not exhausted or fossilized in whatever it is. The *Wesen* is double: pure being and a particular existent, both in terms of its haecceity and its quiddity. The *Wesen* is trifold: the soul, form, and the spiritual copula that holds them together while also leaving them to themselves. At the risk of overplaying my hand, I have translated *Wesen* as *being* (which is both pure being and a being), but consistently marked this by including the German term in brackets. I think the philosophical stakes merit such a solution.

Although German grammar requires that the pronoun for "artist" be male, when Schelling speaks of people, he uses "*Mensch*," which does not decide the gender one way or another. Nor is there an inflexible expectation that all artists have been, are, and will be men. Attempting to avoid the infelicity of a cumbersome and strained solution, I referred to "artists" rather than "the artist," which allowed me to use a more inclusive pronoun.

My comments, kept to a minimum and offered in hopes of being helpful, are always in brackets, whether briefly interpolated in the text or appearing as footnotes. Both are marked: —TR. A small selection from this translation was published previously in a dramatically reduced form and without my critical notes in Daniel Whistler and Benjamin Berger (eds.), *The Schelling Reader* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

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[291] Through a sublime password, festive days like the one today, which was named after the King, summon everything in unison to feelings of joy.[1] Because they can only be celebrated with words and speeches, they seem to lead of themselves to the contemplation of what, recalling what is most universal and worthy, connects the auditors as much in spiritual participation as they are united in patriotic feelings. Is there anything higher for which to thank the rulers of the earth than that they provide and preserve for us the calm enjoyment of everything splendid and beautiful? We cannot therefore contemplate their charitable deeds or the public fortune without being immediately led to what is universally human. Such a festival could hardly be better glorified than by the unanimous delight at his unveiling and exhibiting a veritable and great work of plastic art. No less unifying is the attempt, given that this place is consecrated exclusively to the sciences, to unveil the work of art overall in accordance with its being [*Wesen*] and to let it, so to speak, emerge before the spiritual eye.

For a long time how much has been felt, thought, and judged about art! How can this address therefore hope, in such a dignified gathering of the most enlightened connoisseurs and insightful judges, to bring new excitement to the object unless it scorned foreign embellishment and offered an account of part of the universal favor and receptivity that it enjoys? [292] For other objects have to be elevated by eloquence, or, if there is something effusive about them, they have to be made credible by exposition. Art already has the advantage from the outset that it is given as visible and that doubts regarding claims about sublime perfection, because they exceed the common level of understanding, can be met with an exposition in which the idea that was not intellectually grasped can in this region emerge incarnate before the eyes. Moreover, this lecture can avail itself of the consideration that the many doctrines formed around this object still went back far too little to the originary source of art. For most artists, even though they should imitate all of nature, nonetheless seldom obtain a concept about what the being [*Wesen*] of nature is. Connoisseurs and thinkers, however, because of the greater inaccessibility of nature, for the most part find it easier to derive their theories more from the contemplation of the soul than from a science of nature. Such doctrines are usually far too shallow. They may in general say many a good and true thing about art, but they are nonetheless ineffective for plastic artists themselves and utterly fruitless for their practice.

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[1] [Schelling delivered this address at the Bavarian Academy of Sciences (*Die Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften*) in Munich, where he was a member from 1806 until 1820. It was presented on October 12, 1807, in celebration of the name day of King Maximilian I Joseph (1756-1825; reigned from 1806) of Bavaria. Maximilian I Joseph, along with his son, the Crown Prince Ludwig I, were prodigious collectors of Greek and Roman sculpture, which are still housed in Munich's Glyptothek, commissioned by Ludwig during the following decade. This address was later included, with substantive amplifications in the form of eight footnotes, as the penultimate essay in the first and only volume of Schelling's *Philosophische Schriften* (1809), right before the first appearance of the celebrated essay on *Human Freedom*.—TR.]

For plastic art, in accordance with the most ancient expression, should be a mute poetry. The inventor of this declaration doubtless meant this: they should express, just like those spiritual thoughts, concepts whose origin is the soul, but not through language, but rather, like silent nature, through figure, through form, through sensuous works that are independent from the soul. Plastic art therefore manifestly stands as an active copula between the soul and nature and can only be grasped in the living intermediary between both. Indeed, because it has the relationship to the soul in common with every other art, including poetry, what remains peculiar to it alone is that which connects it to nature and that by which it has a productive force similar to nature. Only with reference to this can a theory be satisfactory to the intellect and productive and helpful to art itself.

[293] We therefore hope, in contemplating plastic art in relationship to its veritable paragon and originary source, namely, nature, to be able to contribute something not yet known to its theory and provide some more precise determinations and clarifications of its concepts. But above all we hope to let the coherence of the whole edifice of art appear in the light of a higher necessity.

But has not science always recognized this relationship? Does not all modern theory even derive from the definite principle that art should be the imitator of nature? This was probably so. But how does the artist practice this broadly general principle when the concept of nature is ambiguous and when there are almost as many representations of nature as there are lifestyles? Some think nature is nothing more than the dead aggregate of an indeterminate amount of objects, or space into which objects are put as in a container. For others it is just the land from which they draw their food and sustenance. Only to the inspired researcher is it the holy and eternally creative primordial force of the world, which generates and actively produces all things out of itself. This principle would be highly meaningful if it taught art to emulate this productive force. One can hardly doubt what sense this intends if one reflects on the general state of the sciences at the time of their initial creation. How strange it would be for those who denied all life to nature to put it forward in art for imitation! The words of the profound man would apply to them: Your mendacious philosophy has done away with nature, so why do you demand that we imitate it? So that you could renew your enjoyment by committing the same act of violence against the students of nature?[2]

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[2] These are the words of J. G. Hamann from the *Kleeblatt hellenistischer Briefe* [*Cloverleaf of Hellenistic Letters*], II, p. 189, moderated in light of the present address. Here are the man's original words: "Your murderously mendacious philosophy has done away with nature, and why do you demand that we should keep imitating it? So that you could renew your enjoyment by also murdering the students of nature?"—Would that F. H. Jacobi, to whom the author is grateful for first facilitating his initial and more meticulous acquaintance with the writings of this primordially forceful spirit, himself undertake the long hoped for edition of Hamann's *Works*, or accelerate it with his word! [It would be almost two decades before the complete edition of Hamann's collected works finally appeared (edited and published over the course of six years in seven volumes and completed in 1827 by Jacobi and Schelling's colleague at the Bavarian Academy of Sciences, Friedrich Roth). Schelling imprecisely cites the source of Hamann's words. They stem from the concise and quite marvelous essay, *Aesthetica in Nuce*.—TR.]

[294] Nature for them was not just silent but a fully dead image with no inwardly native living word. It was a hollow framework of forms from which an equally hollow image should be transferred to canvas or hewn in stone. This was the right doctrine for those ancient and crude peoples who, because they saw nothing divine in nature, produced idols from out of nature. Meanwhile, for the sensuously gifted Hellenes, who felt the trace of the living and acting being [*Wesen*] everywhere, veritable gods arose out of nature.

And should the students of nature imitate everything of everything in nature without distinction? The student should only reproduce beautiful objects and within these only what is beautiful and consummate. This would seem to determine the principle more precisely but at the price of maintaining that in nature the perfect is mixed with the imperfect and the beautiful with the non-beautiful. How would the student who attributes no other relationship to nature than servile imitation distinguish one from the other? This type of imitator more likely and easily appropriates the defects of the original image than its merits because the defects present themselves as more comprehensible features to manage. And so we also see that with the imitators of nature in this sense the ugly is imitated more often and with more love than the beautiful. If we do not look at things with respect to the being [*Wesen*] within them, but rather with respect to their empty, and abstract form, then they also say nothing to our interior. We must put our own minds, our own spirits, at stake before they answer us. But what is the consummation of each thing? It is nothing other than the creative life in it, its power to be there and exist. Hence one who regards nature overall as something dead will never achieve that deep process, similar to the chemical one, through which, as if purified by fire, the pure gold of beauty and truth emerges.

Nothing changed regarding the main view of this relationship [295] even when one began more generally to feel the insufficiency of this principle. Nothing even changed with Johann Winckelmann's magnificent foundation of a new doctrine and insight. Indeed, he re-established the entire efficacy of the soul in art and elevated it from its undignified dependency to the realm of spiritual freedom. Animated by the beauty of the forms in the plastic images of antiquity, he taught that the bringing forth of an ideal nature that is elevated above actuality, along with the expression of its spiritual concepts, is the highest aim of art.

But if we examine what was for the most part understood by art's exceeding of actuality, we find, even with this doctrine, the endurance of the view that nature is a mere product and things are lifeless existents. The idea of a living, creative nature was in no way awoken by it. For these ideal forms could not be animated through a positive insight into their being [*Wesen*]. And if the forms of actuality were dead for the dead contemplators, then they were no less dead for art. If spontaneous bringing forth was not possible for the former, then it was also not possible for the latter. Although the object of imitation was altered, imitation remained. Into the stead of nature entered the elevated works of antiquity, whose external forms the students endeavored to copy, albeit bereft of the spirit that filled them. These works are just as unapproachable, nay, even more unapproachable, than the works of nature. They

leave you even colder than the latter if you do not bring the spiritual eye to them in order to penetrate their husk and feel the active force within them.

On the other hand, since then, artists inherited a certain idealist verve and represented the sublimity of beauty above matter. But these representations were like beautiful words, which do not correspond to deeds. If earlier customs of art produced bodies without soul, then this view merely taught the mystery of the soul, but not that of the body. Theory, as it customarily does, rapidly took to the other [296] side, but without finding the living intermediary.

Who can say that Winckelmann had not realized the highest beauty? But it appeared to him only in disparate elements. On the one hand, it appeared as beauty, which is conceptual and flows out of the soul. On the other hand, it appeared as the beauty of forms. But what active and effective copula binds them together? Or through what force was the soul along with the body simultaneously created as if with a single breath? If this does not lie within the capacity of art, as in nature, then nothing whatsoever is capable of creation. Winckelmann did not define this living intermediary. He did not teach how the forms can be produced from out of the concept. Hence art transitioned to that method that we might dub the "retrograde" because it strives to go from the form to the being [*Wesen*]. But the unconditioned cannot be attained in this fashion. It is not found by intensifying conditions. Hence such works, which originated in form, despite all their cultivation, display as a trait of their origin an insatiable vacuity precisely in the place where we expect the consummate, essential [*Wesentliche*], and ultimate. The miracle through which the conditioned is elevated to the unconditioned, and humanity becomes divine, is missing. The magic circle is drawn, but the spirit that should be apprehended within it does not appear. The spirit does not acquiesce to the call of the one who holds that creation is only possible through mere form.

Far be it for us thereby to want to find fault with the spirit of the consummate man himself. His eternal doctrine and revelation of the beautiful were more the occasioning cause than the efficient cause of this direction in art! Holy be his memory to us, just as with the commemoration of all universal benefactors! He stood in sublime solitude like a mountain range through his whole age. No responsive tone, no sentiment of life, no pulsation in the whole wide realm of science, accommodated his endeavors.[3] Just as his true contemporaries arrived, [297] the life of this splendid

[3] Winckelmann's objectivity is singular for his entire age, not only in terms of his style, but also of his entire manner of contemplation. There is a cast of mind, which thinks *about* things, and another that wants to know them in themselves in accordance with their pure necessity. Winckelmann's *History of Art* [*Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, *History of the Art of Antiquity* (1764)—TR.] is the first example of the latter. This spirit later exhibited itself in other sciences, with the same great resistance from those otherwise accustomed. The first cast of mind is easier.—Winckelmann's own age only knew this latter type of master, although one would also have to make an exception for *Hamann*, whom we cited earlier. But is Hamann to be counted as part of his age, in which he remained incomprehensible and without effect? *Lessing*, the only one to be cited along with Winckelmann from that age, is thereby great in that, amid the whole subjectivity of that time, and, although he developed the highest mastery in thinking about things, he nevertheless tended yearningly, even if unconsciously, toward another way of thinking. This is not only evident in his recognition of Spinozism, but also in many other proposals, especially the

man was cut down.[4] And yet he had such a great effect! His sensibility and spirit did not belong to his time, but rather [298] either to antiquity or to the present that he created. His doctrine provided the first foundation of the general structure of the knowledge and science of antiquity, which later times have begun to execute. To him first belonged the idea of contemplating the works of art according to the manner and laws of eternal works of nature. Before him, and even after him, all things human were regarded as the work of lawless arbitrariness and were treated accordingly. His spirit was among us like an air blowing from gentle climes, clearing the skies that obscured the art of ancient times, so that we could now behold these stars with clear eyes, unobstructed by fog. How he felt the vacuity of his age! Indeed, if we had no other reason than his eternal feeling of friendship and his inextinguishable longing for its enjoyment, this would be justification enough to confirm the spiritual love of this consummate man, classical in both life and work. And if he still felt another insatiable longing beyond that, it was for an intimate insight into nature. In the last years of his

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education of humankind. But the author must always dismiss as a prejudice the view that Lessing and Winckelmann were of one and the same mind and viewpoint regarding the aim of art.—Listen to the following fragment by Lessing: "The actual definition of a fine art can only be what it is capable of bringing forth with the assistance of another art. In painting, it is corporeal beauty . . . In order to be able to bring together corporeal beauties of more than one kind, one fell upon historical painting . . . The expression and representation of history was not the painter's final intention. History was merely a means. Their final intention was to achieve manifold beauty . . . The new painters manifestly make the means into the intention. They paint histories in order to paint histories and do not consider that they are thereby making their art just an auxiliary to other arts and sciences, or at least making the assistance of other arts and sciences so indispensable that their art entirely loses its value as a basic art . . . The expression of corporeal beauty is the definition of painting . . . The supreme corporeal beauty is therefore its supreme definition, etc." (From *Lessings Gedanken und Meinungen*, ed. Friedrich Schlegel, book one, 292 [Leipzig, 1804]). One can understand well how Lessing, with his sharp distinctions, could think and insist upon the concept of a purely *corporeal* beauty. If need be, one can also understand how he could be persuaded that, after thinking away its aim of presenting manifold corporeal beauty, nothing else would be left over for historical painting than just—*the representation of history*. But if one were to reconcile Winckelmann's doctrine, especially as it is included in the *History of Art* (the *Monumenti inediti* [*Monumenti antichi inediti* (1767–1768)—TR.] were written for Italians and do not have the same documentary value as the former) with Lessing's assertions, especially if Winckelmann's view can be proved that the presentation of actions and passions, in short, the supreme genre of painting, was just invented in order to indicate an alteration of corporeal beauty in it, then the author has understood nothing, nothing at all, of Winckelmann. The comparison, with respect to the inner and outer style of both writers, of Lessing's *Laocoön* [*Laokoön oder Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie*, 1767] as the most intellectually provocative sense of art in the above sense, with Winckelmann's work, remains salient. The utter difference between the two kinds of spiritual treatment of an object should be clear to everyone. [The renowned Greek sculpture, *Laocoön and His Sons* (aka *The Laocoön Group*), was rediscovered in Rome in 1506 and now sits in the Museo Pio-Clementino in the Vatican Museums. It depicts the death throes of the Trojan priest Laocoön and his two sons as they are constricted by serpents. Winckelmann discusses the paradoxical nobility, beauty, and sublimity of the sculpture, despite its gruesome subject matter and the agony it depicts. Schelling in his own way in this address engages the paradox of beauty within pain and death (see especially, pp. 213–214 in the German pagination). Lessing for his part, however, pushed back, arguing that its beauty was a restriction of its medium and that poetry (e.g., Virgil's depiction of Laocoön's demise) was better able to capture their pain.—TR.]

[4] [Winckelmann was stabbed by Francesco Arcangeli on June 7, 1768, in a hotel in Trieste and died the next day.—TR.]

life, he repeatedly expressed to his trusted friends that his final contemplations would go from art to nature.[5] It was as if he had a presentiment of what he lacked and that what he missed was to glimpse the highest beauty, which he found in God, also in the harmony of the universe.

[299] Nature everywhere at first opposes us in more or less hard form and taciturnity. It is like the sincere and quiet beauty that does not excite attention through screaming signs and does not attract the common eye. How can we spiritually melt, so to speak, that seemingly hard form so that the pure force of things flows together with the force of our spirit in a single stream? We must go through and beyond form to win it back as comprehensible, living, and truly felt. If we contemplate the most beautiful forms, what is left over once we have excised in thought the acting principle within it? Nothing but purely inessential qualities such as extension and spatial relationships. If a part of the matter is near and external to another, does it contribute to its inner quiddity [*Wesenheit*] or does it make no difference whatsoever? Obviously the latter. The proximity of the parts does not make the form but rather the manner in which they are so. Only a positive force determines the latter, a force, which is apart from, and even counteracts, the being in proximity of the parts. It subjugates the variegation of the parts into the unity of a concept, from the force acting in the crystal to that which in human cultivation, like a mild magnetic current, endows the material parts with such a reciprocal position and location that their essential unity and beauty can become visible in the concept.

But just the acting principle in general, as spirit and active science, is insufficient to make the being [*Wesen*] appear in the form so that we can grasp it as living. Indeed, all unity can only be spiritual in kind and origin. And toward what does any investigation of nature strive if not toward finding science itself in this? For that in which there would be nothing to understand could also not be subject to the understanding; that which is without knowledge cannot itself be known. The science through which nature acts is certainly not the same as the human one, which would be tied to itself through reflection. In the former the concept is not distinguished from the deed or the design from its execution. Hence raw matter blindly strives, so to speak, toward [300] orderly form, and unknowingly adapts purely stereometric forms, which nonetheless certainly belong to the realm of concepts and are something spiritual in the material. The most sublime art of number and measure is native to the stars and is performed in their movements without the stars having any concept of it. This more clearly appears in the living knowledge of animals, although they themselves cannot grasp this knowledge. We therefore see them perform countless acts as they unconsciously wander along, acts that are far more magnificent than the animals themselves: the bird, intoxicated by music, which surpasses itself with soulful tones or the tiny artistic creature that executes simple works of architecture without either practice or instruction. But an overpowering spirit leads all of them. It shines

[5] See for example, *Die Daßdorfische Briefsammlung*, volume 2, p. 235 [*Winckelmanns Briefe an seine Freunde*, ed. C. W. Daßdorf, two volumes (1777-1780)—TR.].

forth in individual flashes of insight, but it does not emerge anywhere as the full sun as it does with humans.

In nature and art, this active science is the copula between concept and form and between body and soul. An eternal concept, devised in an infinite intellect, manages each thing. But through what means does this concept transition to actuality and embodiment? Solely through the creative science, which is just as necessarily bound to the infinite intellect as the being [*Wesen*], which grasps non-sensuous beauty, is connected in the artist to sensual presentation. If the artist is to be called propitious and praiseworthy above all others, and upon whom the gods have bestowed this creative spirit, then the work of art appears splendid to the degree to which it displays to us this unfalsified force of nature's creation and efficacy in a design.

It has long been appreciated that in art not everything is accomplished consciously, and that an unconscious force must be bound up with conscious activity, and that the consummate concord and reciprocal interpenetration of both produce the highest art. Works, which are missing this seal of unconscious science, are recognizable by a palpable lack of the life that is self-sufficient and independent of the one who brought it forth. To the contrary, where this life is in effect, art simultaneously grants to its work, with the highest clarity of the intellect, [301] that inscrutable reality through which it appears similar to a work of nature.

The position of artists with regard to nature is often clarified by the dictum that art, in order to be art, would have to first distance itself from nature and only in its ultimate consummation turn back to it. It seems to us that the true meaning of this dictum can be no other than the following. In all natural beings [*Naturwesen*], the living concept only displays itself by acting blindly. But were it the same way in artists, they would be altogether indistinguishable from nature. If artists consciously wanted to subordinate themselves entirely to the actual, and reproduce present existence with obsequious fidelity, they would bring forth masks, but not artworks. Artists must therefore distance themselves from the product or from the creature, but only to elevate themselves to the creative force and grasp it spiritually. Through this they are carried up to the realm of pure concepts. They abandon the creaturely, only to win it back with a thousand-fold profit, and at least in this sense they turn back to nature. Artists should at least emulate the spirit of nature, which acts within things, and which only speaks through form and figure as if they were symbols. Only insofar as they grasp this in living imitation have they created something true. For works that originated in an assemblage of residually beautiful forms would nonetheless be bereft of any beauty because that which actually makes the work or the whole beautiful can no longer be form. What makes it beautiful is beyond form. It is being [*Wesen*], the universal, the look and expression of the spirit of nature dwelling within.

There can be no doubt as to how to regard the general demand for a so-called idealization of nature in art. This demand seems to originate in a manner of thinking according to which the actual is not truth, beauty, and the Good, but rather the opposite of all of these. If the actual were indeed opposed to truth and beauty, artists would not have to uplift or idealize it. They would rather have to sublate [*aufheben*] or annihilate it [302] in order to create something true and beautiful. Yet how could

anything except the true be actual, and what is beauty if it is not being [*Sein*] wholly without lack? What higher aim could art have than to present a being [*Seiende*] that is indeed in nature? Or how would art undertake an exceeding of so-called actual nature if it would always have to remain behind it? For does art endow its works with sensuous and actual life? This statue does not breathe, has no pulse, and is not warmed by blood. As soon as we merely posit that the aim of art is the presentation of a true being, then both of these, the former allegedly exceeding the actual and the latter apparent lagging behind the actual, turn out to be consequences of one and the same principle. Their works only seem to be superficially animated. In nature life seems to penetrate deeper and wholly to marry itself to matter. But do not the constant alterations of matter and the dissolution, which is the fate of all finite beings, teach us the inessentiality of this connection, and that this could not be an intimate fusion? Therefore art, in the merely superficial animation of its works, indeed only presents what does not have being as not having being [*das Nichtseiende als nichtseiend*]. How is it that to anyone with a somewhat cultivated sensibility, the imitation of so-called actual nature, driven to the point of illusion, appears untrue to the highest degree, even giving off the impression of ghosts, whereas in a work where the concept prevails, it grips them with the full force of the truth and even first transplants them into the genuinely actual world? From where does this originate if not out of the more or less dark feeling, which tells them that the concept is solely what is living in things and that everything else is but vain shadows without being [*wesenlos*]? The same principle explains all the opposed cases, which are cited as examples of art exceeding nature. If art arrests the rapid course of human years, if it combines the force of developed masculinity with the mild charm of earlier youth, or shows a mother of grown sons and daughters in full possession of her forceful beauty, what else is it doing other than sublating what is inessential, namely, [303] time? If, according to the remark of the splendid connoisseur, each wine of nature has only a single moment of truly consummate beauty, then we may say that it also only has a single moment in which it is fully present. In this moment it is what it is for the whole of eternity: beyond this only becoming and perishing are in store for it. When art presents the being [*Wesen*] in that moment, it lifts it out of time. Art lets it appear in its pure being [*Sein*], in the eternity of its life.

Once everything positive and essential is thought away from form, it would have to appear restrictive and, so to speak, inimical to the being [*Wesen*]. The same theory, which had conjured this false and impotent ideal, necessarily and simultaneously works towards the formless in art. Of course, if the form had to be restrictive for the being [*Wesen*], it would exist independently from it. But if form is with and through the being [*Wesen*], how could the being [*Wesen*] feel restricted by what it itself created? Violence would certainly occur if form were forced on it, but never when form flows out of the being [*Wesen*] itself. Rather it must rest satisfied in the latter and feel its existence as self-sustained and self-secluded. The determination of form in nature is never a negation, but rather always an affirmation. Admittedly, you usually think of the figure of a body as a restriction that it bears. But if you looked at the creative force, it would be evident to you that the figure is a measure that the

creative force imposes on itself within which it appears as a veritably ingenious force. For the capacity to set one's own bounds is everywhere regarded as a virtue, even as one of the highest. In a similar fashion, most people consider the particular as negating, namely, as what is not the whole or the all. But no particular exists by virtue of its limitation, but rather by virtue of its indwelling force with which it asserts itself as its own whole in the face of the whole itself.

Since this force of particularity, and hence also of individuality, presents itself as living character, the concept of particularity as negating [304] has, as a necessary consequence, an insufficient and false view of the characteristic in art. Art that wanted to present the empty shell or limitation of the individual would be dead and unbearably severe. We clearly do not demand the individual. We demand to see more, namely, the living concept of the individual. But if artists realize the look and being [*Wesen*] of the creative idea within themselves and lift it out, they form the individual into a world of their own, into a genus and an eternal archetype or primordial image. And whoever has grasped the being [*Wesen*] need not fear severity and strictness, for these are the conditions of life. We see nature, which appears in its consummation as the highest mildness, in all particulars as determination, even first and foremost as working toward the severity and taciturnity of life. Just as all of creation is a work of the highest renunciation,[6] artists must first disown themselves and descend into the particular, not shying away from detachment[7] or from the pain, indeed the agony, of form. From its first works onwards, nature is thoroughly characteristic. Nature seals up the force of fire and the flash of light in hard stone and the sweet soul of sound in harsh metal. Even at the threshold of life, and already tending toward organic figure, nature, overwhelmed by the force of form, relapses into petrification. The life of plants exists in silent receptivity, but in what precise and severe contours is this patient life restrained? The conflict between life and form really seems to begin in the realm of animals: it conceals its first works in hard shells, and where these were eliminated, the animate world, through the art drive, rejoined the realm of crystallization. It finally emerged bolder and freer with the appearance of active and living characters, whose genera were the same throughout. Indeed, art cannot begin as profoundly as nature. If beauty is dispersed equally everywhere, there are still different degrees of the appearance and explication of the being [*Wesen*] and thereby with beauty. But art demands a certain fullness of beauty. It does not want to play a particular sound or tone or even an isolated [305] chord, but rather right away the full-toned melody of beauty. Hence art most prefers to reach immediately for the highest and most evolved, namely, the human figure. Since it is not granted to art to embrace the immeasurable whole and since only particular fulgurations appear in all other creatures, the whole and complete being [*Sein*] without division only appears in the human. Hence art is

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[6] [*Entäußerung* is relinquishment and renunciation, but in Schelling's sense would belie a lopsided emphasis on the initiatory aspect of a double movement. It is a renunciation of oneself in order also to go outside of oneself, emptying oneself of oneself in order to go beyond oneself, much like the Greek κένωσις denotes.—TR.]

[7] [*Abgeschiedenheit* is a key term for Meister Eckhart, a seminal figure for Schelling. See Eckhart's treatise, *Von der Abgeschiedenheit*.—TR.]

not only permitted, but also summoned, to see the whole of nature only in the human. Because nature collects everything into a single point, it also repeats its entire diversity, and takes the same path that it had run through in its broad scope a second time in a narrower scope. Here the demand originates that the artist first be faithful and true regarding the limited in order to appear consummate and beautiful in the whole. What matters here is to struggle, not in slack and weak, but in strong and courageous, battle with the creative spirit of nature, which also distributes character and peculiarity in unfathomable diversity to the human world. Before artists may dare want to attain, through ever-higher combinations and the finite fusion of manifold forms, the extreme beauty in sculpture of the highest simplicity and with infinite content, they must first exercise restraint in the realization of that through which the peculiarity of things is something positive. This will preserve them from vacuity, softness, and inner nullity.

Only through the consummation of form can form be annihilated and this in the characteristic is indeed the ultimate goal of art. But just as apparent accord is more easily achieved in shallow souls than in others but is inwardly hollow, so it is in art with rapidly attained external harmony without the fullness of content. And if doctrine and instruction must counteract the spiritless imitation of beautiful forms, then they must first of all counteract the inclination toward a mollycoddled and characterless art whose fancy names just cover over its incapacity to fulfill the basic conditions of art.

Sublime beauty, where the fullness of form sublates form itself, [306] was accepted by the modern doctrine of art after Winckelmann as not only the highest, but also the only, measure. But because one overlooks the deep ground upon which it rests, it so happened that, regarding the paragon of everything affirmative, a negative concept was grasped instead. Winckelmann compares beauty to the water that was scooped out of the womb of the source. The less taste that it has, the more it is esteemed as healthy. It is true that the highest beauty is characterless. But it is characterless in the way that we say that the universe has no determinate dimensions. It has neither length nor breadth nor depth because everything is contained in the same infinity. Or that the art of creative nature is formless because it itself is not subjugated by any form. In this and in no other understanding can we say that Hellenic art in its supreme sculpture ascended to the characterless. But it did not strive after this immediately. They first turned upward toward divine freedom from out of the bonds of nature. It could not have been lightly seeded grain, only a deeply dormant seed, out of which this heroic formation sprouted. Only powerful movements of feeling, only profound tremors of fantasy through the imprint of omni-animating and ubiquitously working nature, could impress art with insuperable force. With this, from the stiffly reserved solemnity of the sculpture of earlier times until the works of overflowing sensuous charm, it always remained faithful to the truth and spiritually engendered the highest reality that mortals are granted to behold. Just as their tragedy commences with the greatest ethical character, their sculpture began with the solemnity of nature, and the severe goddess Athena is the first and only muse of plastic art. This epoch is characterized by the style that Winckelmann described as

abidingly austere and severe. The next or higher style, solely through the intensification of these characteristics to the point of sublimity and simplicity, was able to develop out of this. In images of the most consummate and divine natures, it is not only necessary to unite the fullness of forms, of which the human nature is eminently capable. The union must also be of the type that [307] we can commemorate in the universe itself, namely, that the lower qualities, or the ones that relate to more modest qualities, were taken up by higher qualities, and finally by the single highest quality, in which they are reciprocally extinguished as particulars but still exist as being [*Wesen*] and force. If we cannot call this elevated and self-sufficient beauty "characteristic" in the sense of the limitation or conditionality of appearance, it nonetheless continues to be indistinguishably in effect, just like in the crystal, which is utterly transparent even though its texture endures. Every characteristic element carries its weight, however gently, and helps bring about the sublime indifference of beauty.

The external face or basis of all beauty is the beauty of form. But since there can be no form without being [*Wesen*], it follows that wherever there is form, there is also character in visible, or at least in sensible, presence. Characteristic beauty is therefore beauty at its root, out of which beauty can then first emerge as fruit. Of course, the being [*Wesen*] outgrows form, but the characteristic nonetheless remains the always-acting foundation of the beautiful.

The most dignified connoisseur,[8] upon whose kingdom the gods bestowed nature as well as art, compared the characteristic in its relationship to beauty with the skeleton in its relationship to the living form. If we interpret this splendid simile in our sense, then we would say that in nature the skeleton is not, as we customarily think, cut off from the living whole. The firm and the soft, the determining and the determined, reciprocally presuppose each other and can only be because of each other. For that very reason, the vital characteristic is already the whole figure, which originated out of the reciprocal effect of bones and flesh and of the active and the passive. But if art, like nature, at higher levels represses inwardly the initially visible skeletal structure, then it can never be opposed to the figure and beauty because it does not cease to cooperatively determine the latter as well as the former.

Given that high and indifferent beauty counts as the supreme measure of art, the question remains if it should also count as the only [308] measure of art. This must seemingly depend on the degree of extension and fullness with which a specific art can operate. Yet nature in its broad range always presents the higher simultaneously with the lower. Creating the divine in the human, it acts upon the mere matter and ground of all the remaining products, which must be so that the being [*Wesen*] as such can appear in contrast to them. Indeed, in the higher world of humans, the great masses again become the basis upon which the divine, purely embraced by the few, manifests through legislation, dominion, and the founding of faiths. Where art therefore operates more with the manifold of nature, it may and must also indicate again, along with the highest measure of beauty, its foundation and, so to speak, the

[8] [King Maximilian I Joseph—TR.]

matter of the foundation, in its own formations. It is significant that here the nature of the various art forms originally unfolds. Sculpture [*die Plastik*], in the more precise meaning of the word, refuses to give space to its object externally. It bears the space internally. But it is precisely this that prohibits its greater extension. Indeed, sculpture is necessitated to indicate the beauty of the universe almost in a single point. It must therefore immediately strive toward the highest, and it can only reach diversity separately and through the most severe segregation of what is reciprocally opposed. By separating the purely animal from the human nature, sculpture also succeeds in fashioning vulgar creations as agreeable, even beautiful, as the beauty of the many satyrs preserved from antiquity teaches us. Indeed, like the cheerful spirit of nature parodying itself, sculpture can reverse its own ideal, and by treating it with play and jest, as exemplified by the excess found in the statues of Silenus, it appears liberated anew from the duress of matter. But it is always necessary utterly to segregate its work in order to make it concur with itself and to make it into a world unto itself, because there is no higher unity into which it can resolve the dissonance of the particulars. In contrast, the scope of painting is better able to match the world and poeticize in epic proportions. In a work like the *Iliad* there is even space for a Thersites. Does not everything find [309] a place in the great epic poem of nature and history? Here the particular hardly counts for itself. The whole takes up its stead and what would not be beautiful for itself becomes so through the harmony of the whole. If, in an expansive work of painting, which connects its figures through the assignment of space and through light, shading, and reflection, the highest measure of beauty was ubiquitously applied, the most unnatural monotony would emerge because, as Winckelmann says, the highest concept of beauty is here everywhere one and the same, permitting few deviations. To avoid this, the particular must be favored over the whole instead of subjugating it to the whole wherever the whole emerges out of a multiplicity. Consequently, in such a work, gradations of beauty must be respected whereby the full beauty, concentrated in the center, first becomes visible, and equilibrium in the whole emerges out of an overweighing of the particular. Here the restricted characteristic also finds its place, and theory should at least not so much point painters toward that tight space that concentrically gathers everything beautiful, but rather more toward the characteristic diversity of nature, through which they alone can grant the full weight of living contents to a great work. This is what the splendid Leonardo, among the founders of the new art, thought. So too Raphael, the master of high beauty, who did not shy away from presenting beauty in its inferior measure so it did not appear monotonous and without life and actuality. He understood not only how to bring forth beauty, but also how to interrupt its uniformity through the variability of expression.

Character can certainly also be expressed in rest and equilibrium, but it is only in activity that it is first actually alive. We mean by character a unity of plural forces, which constantly works toward a kind of equilibrium and determinate measure and which, if undisturbed, corresponds to a similar equilibrium in the regularity of forms. But this living unity can indicate itself in action and activity, [310] only when the forces

are aroused into insurrection by some kind of cause and step out of their equilibrium. Everyone recognizes that this is the case with the passions.

Here that well-known theoretical prescription presents itself to us, namely, the demand that the passions in their actual outbreak be moderated as much as possible so as not to injure the beauty of form. On the contrary, we believe in inverting this prescription so that we would have to say that it is precisely through beauty itself that we should moderate the passions. We are right to fear that this requisite moderation will be understood negatively. The true demand is rather that a positive force counters passion. Just as virtue does not consist of the absence of the passions but rather of the dominion of the spirit over them, so too is beauty proved not through the expulsion or diminution of the passions, but rather through the dominion of beauty over them. The forces of the passions must actually be indicated. The possibility of their complete insurrection must be visible, but also that they were suppressed through the dominion of character. The passions break against the forms of fortified beauty just as waves of a torrent, which, although filled to the banks, cannot overflow them. Otherwise, this undertaking of moderation would just be the same as vapid moralists, who, exhausted by humanity, prefer to mutilate the nature in them and have so utterly taken away anything positive from action, that these folks revel in the spectacle of great crimes to reinvigorate themselves with the sight of at least something positive.

In nature and art, the being [*Wesen*] first of all strives toward the actualization and presentation of itself in the particular. The greatest severity of form therefore indicates itself in the beginnings of both. For without limitations, the unlimited could not appear. If there were no harshness, there could be no softness, and making the unity tangible can only happen through ipseity, segregation, and antagonism. Hence, in the beginning, the creative spirit appears utterly lost in form, inaccessible, taciturn, and austere, even writ large. But the [311] more it succeeds in uniting its entire fullness in a single creature, the more its severity gradually subsides. Where it fully develops form so that it rests satisfied in it and grasps itself, it cheers up, so to speak, and starts to move in soft lines. This is the state of the most beautiful ripeness and flowering, where the pure receptacle stands there consummated, and the spirit of nature is freed from its ties and feels its affinity with the soul. As through a mild dawn ascending over the whole figure, it heralds the advent of the soul. It is not yet there, but everything readies for its reception with the mild play of delicate movements. The stiff contours melt, becoming soft and gentle. A lovely being [*Wesen*] that is neither sensuous nor spiritual, but rather ungraspable, diffuses itself over the figure and nestles into all the figures and to each oscillation of the extremities. This being [*Wesen*], which, as we said, is ungraspable yet perceptible to everyone, is what the Greek language calls χάρις [*kháris*] and we call grace [*Anmut*].

Where grace appears in fully effected form, it is from the side of nature consummate. It is not lacking anything, and every requirement is satisfied. Here the soul and the body are also already in consummate consonance. The body is form, and grace is the soul, albeit not the soul in itself, but rather the soul of form, or the soul of nature.

Art can tarry and remain at this point, since its entire task has been completed, at least from one side. The pure image of beauty brought to rest at this stage is the goddess of love. But the beauty of the soul in itself, fused with sensuous grace, is the supreme apotheosis of nature.

The spirit of nature only seems opposed to the soul. But in itself, it is the implement of the soul's revelation. It certainly acts as the contradiction of things, but only to be able thereby to bring forth the singular being [*Wesen*] as the supreme mildness and reconciliation of all the forces. All other creatures are driven by the mere spirit of nature and through it assert their individuality. Only in humans, as in the central point, does the soul arise, without which the world, like nature, would be without the sun.

[312] The soul in humans is therefore not the principle of individuality, but rather that through which they elevate themselves above all ipseity and thereby become capable of sacrificing themselves. It is non-egoistic love and supremely the contemplation and realization of the being [*Wesen*] of things and, precisely thereby, of art. The soul is no longer occupied with matter, nor does it immediately associate with it, but rather only with the spirit as the life of things. Also appearing in the body, the soul is nonetheless free from it. The consciousness of the body is in the soul, and, in the most beautiful formations, it floats like a light dream that does not disturb the soul. The soul is not a quality, or a faculty, or any such thing of the kind. It does not know, but rather is knowledge. It is not good, but rather the Good. It is not beautiful, as bodies can be, but rather beauty itself.

Of course, at first or proximately, the soul of the artist is indicated in the artwork by invention in the particular and in the whole when the soul as unity hovers above the particular in peaceful silence. But the soul should become visible in what is presented. It becomes visible as the primordial force of thought when human beings, utterly consumed with a concept, are lost in worthy contemplation. Or it becomes visible as the indwelling and essential [*wesentlich*] Good. Both are also clearly expressed in the most peaceful state, but notwithstanding, they are more alive when the soul can reveal itself actively and by way of contrast. And because it is principally the passions, which interrupt the peace of life, it is generally accepted that the beauty of the soul first and foremost indicates itself through peaceful dominion in the storm of the passions.

However, there is an important distinction to make here. The soul must not be summoned to moderate those passions, which are only an insurrection of the base spirits of nature. Nor can the soul be indicated as in opposition to them. For if presence of mind is still struggling with the passions, then the soul is not yet arisen. They must be moderated through the nature of humans and through the power of spirit. However, there are higher cases in which it is not a particular force but rather the levelheaded spirit itself that breaks through [313] all dams. There are indeed also cases where the soul, through the copula that combines it with sensuous existence, is subjugated by the pain that should have otherwise been foreign to its divine nature. These are cases where humans feel strafed and at the root of their lives attacked, not

by mere forces of nature, but rather by ethical powers, and where inculpable error[9] dislodges them into crime and thereby into misfortune, and where deepfelt injustice summons the holiest feelings of humanity to insurrection. This is the case with all the veritable and in the sublime sense, tragic, conditions that we witness in the tragedies of antiquity. When the blind forces of the passions are aroused, the levelheaded spirit is present as the guardian of beauty. But when the spirit itself is ripped away as if by an irresistible violence, what vigilant power protects holy beauty? Or when even the soul suffers with it, how does it rescue itself from pain and sacrilege?

It would sin against the meaning and aim of art arbitrarily to repress the force of both pain and factious emotion, and it would divulge a lack of feeling and soul in artists themselves. That beauty, grounded in great and solid forms, has become character, alone demonstrates how art has prepared the means to indicate the whole magnitude of feeling without violating regularity. Where beauty rests on powerful forms as if upon unshakeable pillars, we can infer the great violence that was necessary to bring about even a slight and hardly tangential modification of its relationships. Grace sanctifies pain even more. Its being [*Wesen*] consists of not knowing itself. Just as it was not arbitrarily acquired, it cannot be arbitrarily lost. When unbearable pain, even when insanity, fated by punitive gods, robs one of consciousness and self-control, grace still stands by the suffering figure as if it were a protective δαίμων [*daimōn*], who lets nothing untoward and nothing that opposes humanity come about, and when it falls, at least it falls as a pure and immaculate sacrifice. Not yet the soul, but rather its premonition [314], grace brings forth in a natural operation what the soul does through a divine force, namely, the metamorphosis of pain, ossification, and even death itself, into beauty.

However, grace, proven in the most extreme repulsion, would be dead without its transfiguration by the soul. But what expression befits it in this situation? The soul rescues itself from pain and emerges vanquishing, not vanquished, by renouncing its copula with sensuous existence. Although the spirit of nature may muster its forces for the preservation of the soul, the soul does not enter this struggle. Yet its presence pacifies the storm of painfully struggling life. Each external dominion can only steal external goods. It cannot reach the soul. It can rend a temporal bond, but it cannot dissolve the eternal bond of a veritable divine love. Not hard and without feeling or renouncing love itself, the soul, however, indicates grace in pain as the feeling that outlasts sensuous existence and so elevates itself over the debris of external life and fortune and into divine glory.

This is the expression of the soul that the creator of the image of Niobe indicates.[10] Every artistic means by which horror is moderated is in operation. The

[9] [Schelling alludes to Aristotle's account of ἁμαρτία and the tragic flaw or error.—TR.]

[10] [Niobe boasted to Leda of her superiority since she had fourteen children and Leda only had two, Apollo and Artemis. Leda took revenge by sending her two divine children to murder Niobe's progeny. The Glyptothek owns a famous copy of what some have called, not without contestation, *The Dead Son of Niobe*, presumably depicting one of Niobe's fourteen slain children. It also owns a Roman sarcophagus that depicts Apollo and Artemis in the act of murdering Niobe's children, so it is evident that Schelling had an influence on King Maximilian I Joseph and his successor, King Ludwig I. Schelling later in the

mightiness of forms, sensuous grace, even the nature of the object itself, assuage the expression through which pain, surpassing all expression, sublates itself again, and beauty, which seemed impossible to rescue alive, is preserved from violation by the entrance of ossification. However, what would all of this be without the soul, and how does the latter reveal itself? In the mother's visage, we do not just see the pain over the felled blossoms of her children, nor just the fear of death as she tries to rescue the remaining ones as well as her youngest daughter taking refuge at her coattails, nor just indignation at the cruel deities, nor, least of all, as has been claimed, just cold spite. We saw all of this, but not for itself, but rather through all the pain, fear, and indignation, eternal love radiates, like a divine light, as that which alone endures. The mother is proven not as what she was, but as what she now *is*, namely, one who remains connected with her beloveds through an eternal copula.

[315] Everyone acknowledges that the greatness, purity, and goodness of the soul also have their sensuous expression. How could we think this, were not the active principle in matter also a being [*Wesen*] with an affinity for and homologous to the soul? In the presentation of the soul, there are in turn stages of art, depending on whether the soul is bound together with the merely characteristic or whether it visibly flows together with favor and grace.[11] Who lacks the insight that in the tragedies of Aeschylus a high ethicality holds sway that is native to the works of Sophocles? But in Aeschylus it is still sealed in an austere husk, and participates little in the whole, because it still lacks the copula of sensuous grace. The Sophoclean grace could nonetheless emerge out of the gravity and still terrible graces of this first art, and with the consummate fusion of both elements. It leaves us wondering whether it is more the ethical or the sensuous grace that enraptures us in the works of this poet. This also exactly the case for the plastic productions that are still in the stark style as compared to those in the later gentle style.

If grace, beyond being the transfiguration of the spirit of nature, is also the binding intermediary between ethical goodness and sensuous appearance, then it is self-evident that art in all its directions most operate in the direction of its midpoint. This beauty, which emerges out of the consummate pervasion of ethical goodness and sensuous grace, grips and enraptures us wherever we find it with the power of a miracle. Because the spirit of nature everywhere else indicates itself as independent from the soul, even to a certain degree striving against it, it seems here, as if through a voluntary concurrence and as if through the inner fire of divine love, to fuse with the soul. With sudden clarity, the remembrance of the original unity of the being [*Wesen*] of nature [316] with the being [*Wesen*] of the soul comes over the beholder: the certainty that all opposition is only apparent, and that love is the copula [*Band*] of

address alludes to the Niobe statues in Florence. The Sala della Niobe in the Uffizi has a statue of Niobe with her youngest daughter clinging to her dress. Winckelmann also discussed Niobe and the death of the Niobids in relationship to Laocoön. More generally, Schelling is tackling this difficult relationship between beauty and pain and death.—TR.]

[11] There are in the presentation of the soul two stages of art: the first, where the soul is still present as an indistinguishable element, more in itself than in consummate actualization; in the other, where the soul flows together with favor and grace.

all beings [*Wesen*], and that pure goodness is the ground and content of the whole of creation.

Here art, so to speak, goes through and beyond itself, and again makes itself a medium. From this peak, sensuous grace again becomes the mere husk and body of a higher life. What was earlier whole is treated as part, and the supreme relationship of art to nature is thereby reached. Nature is made the medium within which the soul becomes visible.

But if in this blossom of art, like in the blossoms in the plant kingdom, all earlier stages repeat themselves, then we are also granted insight, on the contrary, into the divergent directions that art takes as it emerges out of that middle point. The natural diversity of both forms of plastic art especially shows itself here in its supreme efficacy. For sculpture, since it presents its ideas through corporeal things, the supreme seems to have to be in the consummate equilibrium between soul and matter. If matter is given too much weight, sculpture falls below its own idea. But it seems utterly impossible for sculpture to elevate the soul at the expense of matter. To do so, it would have to transcend itself. Indeed, consummate sculptors will not, as Winckelmann says of the Belvedere Apollo,[12] apply more matter to their work than the attainment of its spiritual intention requires. Conversely, they will not place more force in the soul than is simultaneously expressed in the matter. For their art is based on an utterly corporeal expression of the spiritual. Sculpture can therefore attain its true peak only in natures, which bring along their concept, that is, in natures that are at all times in actuality everything that is in accordance with their idea or soul. As such, they are consequently divine natures. Had no mythology preceded sculpture, it would have arrived at the gods through its own means. If they did not find any gods, they would have invented them.[13] Moreover, since the spirit has at a deeper stage the same relationship to matter that we ascribed to the soul, namely, that it is a principle [317] of activity and movement, while matter is the principle of rest and inactivity, the law of the moderation of expression and of passion is a basic law that flows out of its nature. But this law is valid not merely for the baser passions, but also likewise for, if we are permitted to put it like this, the loftier and divine passions, of which the soul is capable in rapture, devotion, and adoration. Consequently, given that only the gods are liberated from these passions, the soul is also drawn from their side to the sculpture of divine natures.

Painting seems to be in a completely different situation than sculpture. For painting does not present, as does sculpture, with corporeal things, but rather through light and color and hence through incorporeal and, to a certain degree, spiritual media. Painting in no way produces its images as the objects themselves, but rather expressly wants them to be regarded as images. Painting inherently does not place the same

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[12] [The Belvedere Apollo has been in the possession of the Vatican (and eventually of its Museum collection) since the early 16th Century. Winckelmann celebrated it as the "supreme" extant "ideal of art."—TR.]

[13] [Schelling is playing on the relationship between finding [*finden*] and inventing [*erfinden*]. The prefix intensifies the verb, almost as if to say that had sculptors not found gods, then they would more intensely find them, that is, imagine them.—TR.]

weight on matter that sculpture does, and seems for this reason, in fact, to elevate matter over spirit and to sink deeper under itself than sculpture can in the same case. In opposition to sculpture, it may, with all the greater warrant, place a clear preponderance upon the soul. Where it strives for the supreme, it will, of course, ennoble the passions through character or moderate them through grace, or indicate the power of the soul in them. In contrast to this, however, these higher passions, which are grounded in the affinity of the soul with the Supreme Being [*Wesen*], consummately befit painting. Indeed, if sculpture consummately balances the force, through which a being [*Wesen*] exists external to itself and operates in nature, with the force, through which it lives inwardly as soul, and if it excludes mere passivity from matter, on the contrary, painting may diminish the character of the force and activity of sculpture to the advantage of the soul. Painting thereby metamorphoses them into adoration and forbearance, through which it seems that humans become more sensitive to the inspirations of the soul and to higher influences more generally.

From this opposition alone, we explain the necessary predominance of sculpture in antiquity as well as painting in the modern world. Antiquity was utterly disposed to sculpture while the modern world [318] makes the soul into the passive organ of higher revelations. This shows that it does not suffice to strive after the sculptural in form and presentation. Rather, it is preeminently requisite to think and feel in a sculptural manner, that is, in an ancient manner. But if the debauchery of sculpture into the painterly is a depravation of art, then the contraction of painting into sculptural conditions and forms imposes an arbitrary restriction upon it. If sculpture, just like gravity, works toward a single point, then painting, like light, creatively fills the whole universe.

The proof of this unrestricted universality of painting is history itself and the example of the greatest masters who, without violating the being [*Wesen*] of their art, cultivated each particular stage of art for itself to the point of consummation. Hence, we are able to find again in the history of art the same consequences that we were able to prove in art itself.

This is not exactly with respect to the time, but certainly with respect to the deed.[14] For the oldest and most powerful epoch of liberated art presents itself through Michelangelo. This epoch exhibits its still untamed force in uncanny births just like in the poem of the symbolic prehistoric world where Gaia, after her embrace with

[14] If there were more space for a more detailed demonstration, what is presented here could also be justified as a consequence of the time. For it is easy to remember that the work on the *Last Judgment* [*Il Giudizio Universale* in the Sistine Chapel—TR.] was not begun until after the death of Raphael. But Michelangelo's style was born with him and as such is also earlier than Raphael with respect to the time. Even without attaching further importance to the customary narratives about the effect that viewing Michelangelo's first Roman works had upon the young Raphael or inferring that it was chance that Raphael progressed from an initially somewhat timorous style to the boldness and greatness of consummate art, it is nevertheless indisputable that not only was Michelangelo's style a basis for Raphael's art, but also that it first afforded art in general its complete freedom. Perhaps this may be said less ambiguously of Correggio: "the true Golden Age of art blossomed because of him," although no one will easily misunderstand or misjudge by this what the author considered really supreme in modern painting.

Ouranos, first brings forth the Titans and the sky-storming Giants before the gentle realm of the silent [319] gods prevails.[15] Likewise, the work, *The Last Judgment*, with which, as if it were the incarnation of his work, that titanic spirit filled the Sistine Chapel, seems more reminiscent of the first times of Gaia and her births than the later ones. Attracted by the most hidden grounds to the organic figure, especially the human one, he does not avoid the horrible. He even intentionally seeks it and disturbs it from its repose in the dark workshops of nature. He compensates for the lack of delicacy, grace, and affability with the most extreme force. If he excites horror with his presentations, then it is the terror, which, according to the fable, the old god Pan incites when he suddenly appears in human assemblies.[16] As a rule, nature brings forth the extraordinary through separation and the exclusion of opposed qualities. Likewise in Michelangelo, solemnity and the pensive force of nature must have held sway, more than a sense of the grace and sensitivity of the soul, in order to indicate the supremacy of purely sculptural force in modern painting.

After the pacification of the first dominion and its violent birth drives, the spirit of nature transfigures into the soul and gracefulness is born. After Leonardo da Vinci, art achieved this stage through Correggio, in whose works the sensuous soul is the operative ground of beauty. This is visible not only in the soft contours of his figures, but also in the forms, which are most similar to those of the purely sensuous natures in the works of antiquity. In him blossoms the true golden age of art, which bestowed upon Gaia the gentle reign of Kronos. Here nonchalant innocence, cheerful desire, and childlike pleasure smile out of open and joyful countenances. Here the saturnalia of art is celebrated. The consummate expression of that sensuous soul is chiaroscuro, which Correggio cultivated more than anyone else. What represents the place of matter for painters is shade, and this is the material upon which they must tack the fugitive appearance of light and the soul. Therefore, the more that shade fuses with light so that both become just a single being [*Wesen*] and, so to speak, a single body [320] and a single soul, the more the spiritual appears corporeal, and the more the corporeal is lifted up to the level of the spirit.

After the limits of nature have been overcome, and the monstrous [*das Ungeheure*], the fruit of the initial freedom, is repressed, and form and figure are enhanced by the presentiment of the soul, then the heavens clear up, the palliated earthly can connect with the heavenly, and inversely, the heavenly with gentle humanity. Raphael takes possession of cheerful Olympus and carries us away with him from the earth to the pantheon of the gods, the abiding and blessed beings [*Wesen*]. The blossoming of the most cultivated life, the fragrance of fantasy, along with the zest of the spirit, all breathe as one from his works. He is no longer a painter. He is at the same time a philosopher and a poet. Wisdom stands by the power of his spirit, and how he presents things is how they are ordered in eternal necessity. In him,

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[15] [See Hesiod, *Theogony*, where the intercourse of Gaia (Earth) and Ouranos (Sky) brought forth the twelve Titans as well as the three giants (the Ἑκατόγχειρες or Hecatoncheires, namely, Briareos, Kottos, and Gyges).—TR.]

[16] [Pan's sudden appearance in assemblies created a "panic."—TR.]

art has achieved its aim, and because the pure equilibrium of the divine and human can for the most part only be in a single point, his work is impressed with the seal of singularity.

From this point forward, painting, in order to fulfill that possibility founded within it, could continue to move only toward a single side, and despite what was undertaken in the later revival of art and the various directions at which it tried its hand, it seems that only a single person succeeded in closing the circle of the great masters with a kind of necessity. Just as the new fable of Psyche closed the circle of the old stories of the gods,[17] painting, by dint of the preeminence it granted to the soul, gained a new, although not higher, level of art. Guido Reni endeavored to do this, and he became the authentic painter of the soul. To that point, it seems to us that this is how we would have to make sense of his whole striving, often uncertain, and in quite a few works lost in vagueness. It may better explain the masterpiece of his art from the great collection of the king,[18] which is exhibited to universal admiration. In the figure of the Virgin being assumed into heaven, everything sculpturally austere and harsh has been deleted all the way down to the [321] last trace. Indeed, in this figure, does not painting itself, like the unbound Psyche, who has been liberated from solid form, soar up with its own wings toward transfiguration? There is no being [*Wesen*] here that exists externally with the decisive force of nature. Everything in her expresses susceptibility and silent patience, including her slightly ephemeral flesh, whose quality the Italians call *morbidezza*. This is completely different from the flesh with which Raphael clothes the descending queen of heaven as she appears to the praying pope and a saint.[19] There are certainly grounds for holding that the Niobe of antiquity is the prototype for Guido's female heads, but the ground of this similarity is certainly not a merely arbitrary imitation. Perhaps a similar striving led to the same means. If the Florentine Niobe is sculpture at the extreme in its presentation of the soul within it, then our renowned image is painting at the extreme, which dares to renounce even the need for shadow and shade and operate almost with pure light.

If painting is allowed, because of its particular nature, to attach a clear preeminence to the soul, then it will nonetheless serve theory and instruction well always to draw it back to that original center, from which art is ever and only produced anew. Otherwise, it necessarily stagnates at the stage that we just named above, or it must degenerate into parochial mannerism. For even this higher passivity conflicts with the idea of a consummately forceful being [*Wesen*], whose image and reflection art is called to display. Correct taste will always enjoy beholding a being [*Wesen*] also

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[17] [The myth of Cupid and Psyche appears in Apuleius's relatively late (in the second century of the common era) work, *The Golden Ass*.—TR.]

[18] [Guido Reni's *Assunzione della Vergine* (c. 1638-39), known in Germany as *Die Himmelfahrt Mariae* or the *Assumption of Mary*, was purchased by Maximilian I Joseph from Düsseldorf in 1806, the year before Schelling's address. It hangs in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich as part of the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen.—TR.]

[19] [This is the so-called Madonna of Foligno, painted by Raphael in 1511 while in Rome. It now hangs in the Pinacoteca Vaticana.—TR.]

from its individual side, formed worthily and as autonomously as possible. Indeed, the Godhead would look down with pleasure at a creature that, gifted with the pure soul, forcefully asserted, outwardly and through its sensuously operative existence, the majesty of its nature.

We have seen how the artwork emerges as if from the depths of nature,[20] [322] growing up with determination and limitation and unfolding inner infinity and

[20] This whole treatise proves that the basis of art and therefore also of beauty is in the vitality of nature. As concerns the doctrines of contemporary philosophy, it is well known that the public critics of a doctrine always know it better than its author. So, we learned, by means of an otherwise rightly prized journal, from one such connoisseur that, according to the latest aesthetics and philosophy—a farsighted concept that is a heap into which many famous demi-connoisseurs [*Halbkennern*] throw together everything displeasing, presumably all the better to throw it out—there is only artistic beauty but no natural beauty. We would like to ask where the latest philosophy as well as aesthetics elaborates such a claim. At this moment do we not remember what concept judges of this kind care to associate with the word nature, especially in regard to art? The aforementioned critic, by the way, does not mean anything wicked by that view. Rather he seeks to render aid to the latest philosophy through a rigorous proof in its idioms and forms. Let us examine the splendid proof! "The beautiful is the appearance of the divine in the earthly, the infinite in the finite. Indeed, nature is also an appearance of the divine. But nature, which has been since the beginning of time and which lasts until the end of days," as this well-informed person more precisely expresses it, "does not appear to the human spirit, and only in its infinitude is it beautiful." However we want to take this infinitude, there remains the contradiction that although beauty is the appearance of the infinite in the *finite*, nature should only be beautiful in its infinitude. Doubting himself, the connoisseur objects that every part of a beautiful work is also still beautiful, for example, the hand or the foot of a beautiful sculpture. But (so he resolves the doubt) where then do we have the hand or the foot of *such a colossus* (that is to say, nature)? With this, the value and the sublimity of the philosophical connoisseur's concept of the infinitude of nature are discernible. He locates infinitude in immeasurable extension. That there is a true and essential infinitude in every part of matter is an exaggeration that this proper man certainly does not propound, even though he speaks the language of the latest philosophy. It could not be thought without debauchery that the human being, for example, could be something more than the mere hand and foot of nature—perhaps more the eye—and besides, we may still find this hand and foot. Consequently, the question itself may not have seemed scathing enough to him, and so the proper philosophical exertion first begins. Of course, it is true, this splendid person believes, that each particular in nature is an appearance of the eternal and the divine—and so in this particular. But the divine does not appear *as* divine, but rather as earthly and ephemeral. What philosophical guile! Just as the shadows in a shadow play come and go at the commands to "appear" and "disappear," the divine appears in the earthly and then it does not, in accordance with what the artist wants. Yet this is just a prelude to a chain of inferences whose links are particularly worthy of accentuation. 1) "The particular as such presents nothing but an image of becoming and perishing—and, indeed, not the idea of becoming and perishing, but rather an example of it, in that it becomes and perishes." (One could also say this of a *beautiful* painting. It presents an example of becoming and perishing as it gradually goes from retaining the atmosphere of its color until it darkens and is attacked by smoke, dust, worms, or moths.) 2) "But now *nothing* appears in nature except the particular" (but a moment ago, every particular was an appearance of the divine in the particular). 3) Therefore, nothing can be beautiful in nature because the divine, which *surely* must appear enduring and abiding (in time, of course!), would have to appear enduring and abiding in order thereby to produce beauty. But there is nothing in nature but particulars, which as such are perishable. Marvelous proof! It only suffers from a few defects, of which we should mention only two. The second claim holds that nothing appears in nature but the particular. But before there was nothing but the particular, there were three things: A) the divine, B) the particular in which the divine appears, and C) that which came to be in this connection, simultaneously divine and earthly. But the humble person, who shortly before was gazing at his countenance in the mirror of the newest philosophy, altogether forgets how it was fashioned. Of A, B,

fullness, until it finally transfigures into grace and then ultimately [323] attains soul. But we had to represent in distinct stages what is only a single deed in the act of the creation of art that has blossomed into its maturity. [324] No doctrine or instruction can create this spiritual force of creation. This force is the pure gift of nature, which concludes itself for the second time, wholly actualizing itself by placing its force of creation in the creature. But just as in the course of art writ large, where each stage appeared successively until they reached the highest, where they all became one, so too writ small, a distinctive formation can only arise where it has legitimately risen from the seed and from the root to its blossoming.

The requirement that art, like every other living being, must depart from its first beginnings and, to rejuvenate itself vitally, must ever anew return to them, may seem like a stern doctrine to an age that is multifariously told how it can expropriate the most accomplished beauty from already existing works of art and thereby reach the ultimate aim in a single step. Since we already have the exquisite and the consummate, why should we revert to the initiatory and uncultivated? Had the great founders of modern art thought like this, we would never have seen their miracles. The creations of the ancients, namely, rich sculpture and flatly sublime works, also were available to them, which they could have immediately translated into painting.[21]

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and C, he now only sees B, of which it now certainly easy to prove that it is not the beautiful for, according to his own explanation, it can only be C. He will now not want to say in contradiction that C does not *appear*. He has already meant something else by this too. For A (the divine) does not appear for itself, but rather only through the particular, B; and therefore in C. But there *is* only B inasmuch as A appears in it, and therefore also only in C. C is therefore all that actually exists. The second defect is found in the concluding premise, even though it is only half certain, almost a mere query interpolated as a subordinate premise: the divine as such would *surely* have to appear as enduring and abiding! Evidently, this well-oriented man has confused the idea of the in itself, which is eternal and beyond all time, with the concept of what abides in time as the endlessly enduring. He aspires to the latter when he should see the former. But if the divine can only appear in the endlessly persisting, it remains to be seen how he can demonstrate from whence it appears in art and consequently as something beautiful in art.—Inevitably, this thoroughly learned man will at other times, perhaps not without reason, point out other misuses of the latest philosophy. Through this succession of the potencies of ever better understanding, comprehension, as one can easily see, must ever further grow. [The fine Schelling scholar Xavier Tilliette, SJ, reported (in the French edition of Schelling's *Textes esthétiques*) that Schelling's scathing and sarcastic diatribe is directed against the historian Heinrich Luden (1778-1847) who succeeded Friedrich Schiller at the University of Jena in 1806. The works in question include his review of Boterwek's *L'Esthétique*, which appeared in an 1807 edition of the *Jenaischen Allgemeinen Literatur-Zeitung*. Also relevant is Luden's *Grundzüge ästhetischer Vorlesungen zum akademischen Gebrauche*, published the following year.—TR.]

[21] That the first and oldest monuments of ancient art were available to the earliest founders of modern painting cannot be maintained. For as the eminent Fiorillo, in his *History of the Graphic Arts* [Johann Dominik Fiorillo, *Geschichte der zeichnenden Künste von ihrer Wiederauflebung bis auf die neuesten Zeiten*, Göttingen: Johann Friedrich Röwer, five volumes, 1798-1808—TR.], volume 1, p. 69, expressly remarks, during the time of Giotto and Cimabue, no ancient paintings and statues had as of yet been discovered. They lay neglected under the earth. "No one could therefore think of training with the paragons left to us by the ancients. Nature was the only object of study for the painters. One remarks that in the works of Giotto, Cimabue's student, nature was assiduously consulted." One pursued this path, which prepared for antiquity and led more closely to it, until, as the above historiographer remarks (p. 286), the Medici house (specifically, Cosimo) began to seek out monuments of ancient art. "Previously, artists had to satisfy themselves with the beauties that nature set forth. The advantage of this assiduous observation,

But this appropriation of beauty, which was not acquired [325] through itself and is consequently incomprehensible, did not satisfy a drive to art, which surfaced completely from the originary, out of which the beautiful should again be created freely and with primordial force. It did not therefore shy from appearing simplistic, artless, and dry compared to the sublime ancients. Nor did it shy from preserving art in an inconspicuous bud until the time of grace arrived. Why do we still contemplate these works of the older masters, from Giotto to Raphael's teacher,[22] with a kind of devotion, indeed, even with a certain preference? Is this not because the faithfulness of their efforts and the great sincerity of their silent and voluntary constraint compel our deep respect and admiration? The present generation comports themselves to [326] them as they did to the ancients. No living tradition, no link of organically growing cultivation, ties together their age and ours. To become like them, we must recreate art in their way, but with our own native force. Even that late summer of art at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries could call forth a few new blossoms from the old stem, but not any new seeds, let alone plant a new stem of art. But to put the consummate works of art back in their place and to search instead for their simplistic and plain beginnings in order to imitate them, as some people would like to do, would just be a new and perhaps even greater misunderstanding. Not only would they not go back to the originary, but also the simplicity would be an affectation and seem feigned.

But what outlook does the present age offer for art, which grows out of a fresh seed and by the root? Is this not for the most part dependent on the taste of the times? Who may promise that such sincere beginnings will receive contemporary acclaim when, on the one hand, it hardly receives the same esteem as other

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however, was that they were prepared for a more scientific treatment of art. The subsequent philosophical artists, like da Vinci or Michelangelo, began to research the laws that persistently ground the appearances of nature."—But even the rediscovery of ancient artworks in the age of these masters, as well as in the age of Raphael, did not in any way result in their imitation in the sense that only later came into fashion. Art remained faithful to its adopted ways and perfected itself out of itself. It took up nothing outside of itself, but rather aspired in its own peculiar way toward the aim of its paragons and coincided with them only in the ultimate point of their consummation. It would take until the age of the *Carracci* [the Bolognese brothers Annibale and Agostino and cousin Ludovico, progenitors of the baroque style of painting—TR.] for the imitation of antiquity to become a formal principle, and it meant something wholly otherwise than the cultivation of one's *own* taste in its spirit. It passed over, especially through *Poussin*, to the art theory of the French, who have an almost exclusively literal understanding of all higher things. After this, it was through [the painter, Anton Raphael] *Mengs* as well as the misunderstanding of *Winckelmann's* ideas that the same thing became native to us. It brought to the German art of the middle of the previous century mattness and a lack of spirit with such obliviousness to art's originary sense that even individual revolts against it were mostly just misunderstood feelings that led from one imitative obsession to still worse ones. Who can deny that in recent times a vastly freer and more native taste has indicated itself in German art? It would answer great hopes if everything harmonized with it, and perhaps give us to expect the spirit that would open the same higher and freer way in art that has been trodden by poetry and the sciences. Only out of this could there be an art that we could call *ours*, that is, an art of the spirit and forces of *our* people and *our* age.

[22] [Raphael's teacher was Pietro Perugino—TR.]

implements of prodigal luxuriance, and, on the other hand, artists and fanciers, wholly incapable of grasping nature, praise and demand the ideal?

Art only originates out of the vital movement of the innermost forces of the mind and the spirit that we call inspiration. Everything that grows up from onerous or small beginnings to great power and heights becomes great because of inspiration. This also holds for realms and states, arts and sciences. But the force of individuals does not achieve this. It is only achieved by the spirit, which diffuses itself throughout the whole. Art is especially dependent on the public mood, just as tender plants depend on the air and weather. It requires a general enthusiasm for sublimity and beauty, like the one in the age of the Medici, which all at once and on the spot called forth the great spirits just like a warm spring breeze. It is also just like the state of mind that Pericles describes to us in his praise of Athens.[23] [327] This is more securely and lastingly preserved for us by the lenient rule of a paternal monarch than by a government of the people. This is where every force voluntarily wells up and every talent displays itself with pleasure because each is exclusively appraised in accord with its worthiness. This is where inactivity is ignominious, and vulgarity does not bring praise. One rather strives toward an ambitious and extraordinary goal. Only then, when public life is put in motion by the same forces that give rise to art, can art derive benefit from public life. Art cannot be directed toward anything external without abandoning the nobility of its nature. Both art and science can only rotate on their own axes. Artists, like anything spiritually effective, can only follow the law that God and nature have written in their hearts, no other. No one can help them. They must help themselves. Nor can they be externally remunerated because, were anything not brought forward for its own sake, it would be immediately void. For that very reason, no one can either command them or prescribe the path upon which they should walk. Although they are worthy of lament when they struggle with their time, they earn our disdain when they pander to it. And how would they even be able to do this? Without great and universal enthusiasm, there are only sects, but no public viewpoint. Merit is not decided by well-established taste or great concepts of a whole people, but rather by the votes of individuals who set themselves up as judges. Art, which is self-sufficient in its sovereignty, curries acclamation and becomes servile where it should rule.

Different ages are allotted different inspirations. May we not expect one for this time? The world that is now newly forming itself, which is already at hand partly externally and partly internally and in the mind, can no longer be measured by any of the criteria of former viewpoints. On the contrary, everything clamors for something greater and heralds a sweeping renewal. Should not that sense in which nature and history are again more vitally revealed also give the great objects back to art? It is futile to want to draw sparks from spent ashes and fan [328] a universal fire from them. Yet it would only take a change in the ideas themselves to be able to raise art out of its

[23] [This is an allusion to Pericles's 431 BCE funeral oration honoring the war dead and celebrating the shared values of Athenian culture at the end of the first year of the second Peloponnesian War as reconstructed by Thucydides in his *History of the Peloponnesian War*.—TR.]

exhaustion. It would only take a new way of knowing, a new faith, to inspire art to the labor through which its rejuvenated life reveals a majesty similar to previous ones. In fact, art that would in all its characteristics be the same as in earlier centuries will never happen again. For nature never repeats itself. There will never again be another Raphael, but there will be another who achieves, in an equally peculiar way, what is supreme in art. Just do not let the fundamental condition be lacking and resurrected art, as it did earlier, will display the aim of its vocation in its first works. If it emerges out of fresh originary force, grace will be present, however covertly, in its formation of the determinate characteristic. In both the soul is already predetermined. Works that originate in such a way are necessary and eternal works, even in their initial imperfection.

Permit us to confess that, with this hope for a new revival of a thoroughly peculiar art, we principally have the fatherland in mind. Even in the age in of art's reawakening in Italy, the full force of the plant of the art of our great Albrecht Dürer came forth out of native soil. How peculiarly German, yet with such affinity for the sweet fruits that the kinder Italian sun brought to supreme ripeness! This people, from whom the revolution in the manner of thinking in modern Europe emerged, to whose spiritual force the greatest inventions attest, who gave laws to the heavens and who carried out research into the deepest depths of the earth, in whom nature has implanted more deeply than anyone else an unshakable sense of right and an inclination to know first causes: this people must culminate in a peculiar art.

If the destinies of art are contingent upon the general destinies of the human spirit, with what hopes may we contemplate what is next for the fatherland? We have a majestic regent, who has granted freedom to the [329] human intellect, wings to the spirit, and rendered philanthropic ideas effective. Upright peoples still preserve the living seeds of older artistic dispositions, and the regent has consolidated the famous seats of old German art. Indeed, the arts and sciences, were they banished everywhere else, would seek asylum here under the protection of the throne, upon which the scepter leads with lenient wisdom and beautifies benevolence as its queen. A hereditary love of art is exalted, through which the young prince, [24] who these days is received with the loud jubilation of a grateful fatherland, has won the admiration of foreign nations. Here they would find the seeds of a future vigorous existence disseminated everywhere. There is already a well-tested community spirit and at least the ties of a single love and a single universal enthusiasm, fortified through the vicissitudes of time, for the fatherland and for the king. No more ardent wishes for his welfare and preservation until the end of human years can arise from any other temple beside this one,[25] which *He* constructed for the sciences.

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[24] [Ludwig became the Crown Prince of Bavaria on New Year's Day, 1806.—TR.]

[25] [The building itself was the Wilhelminum, formerly used by the Jesuits, which Die Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften occupied in 1783, a decade after the Papal Suppression of the Jesuits. Schelling is referring the Academy's transition from an independent scholarly organization to its assumption into the Interior Ministry of King Maximilian I Joseph, where Academy members consequently received a steady salary.—
TR.]

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The Philosophical Foundations of the Late Schelling: The Turn to the Positive, by Sean J. McGrath. Edinburgh University Press, 2021, 296pp., £ 85 (hardback), ISBN 9781474410342

Reviewed by *Julius Frank Theodor Günther*

Appearing in *New Perspectives in Ontology* McGrath´s thoughtful and insightful study not only offers a consistent reading of the late Schelling but also demonstrates the relevance of Schelling´s later works to contemporary post-secular philosophy of religion, especially concerning its potential political-theological impact. As the first of two books, of which the second is still to appear, this study is so far the only example that offers an interpretation which brings together the late Schelling and (post-)secularism. Being a sequel to *The Dark Ground of Spirit: Schelling and the Unconscious*[1] the present book continues as well as advances the original point of McGrath's earlier project, to demonstrate how "secular, philosophical psychology, political theory, even economic theory, unconsciously depend upon forgotten theological controversies."[2] McGrath thus inquires into the late Schelling's "speculative repetition of Christian theology."[3] He identifies "three pillars of the philosophy of the late Schelling": (1) the

[1] Sean McGrath, *The Dark Ground of Spirit: Schelling and the Unconscious* (London: Routledge, 2012).
[2] Sean McGrath, *The Philosophical Foundations of the Late Schelling: The Turn to the Positive* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), ix.
[3] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 2.

theorem of absolute transcendence; (2) non-dialectical personalism; and (3) Trinitarian eschatology.[4]

Theological in content yet philosophical in method, Schelling's lectures on mythology and revelation are shown by McGrath to be an articulation of the politico-philosophical core of the New Testament, that "which makes Christianity hermeneutically volatile and perennially subversive." A centrepiece of the book is Schelling's interpretation of the Christ event in terms of "a non-dialectical theory of personhood."[5] McGrath outlines and evaluates the logical as well as the moral and existential arguments that Schelling offers in his late turn to the irreducible positivity or revealedness of revelation stressing Schelling's positive assumption that "especially the epistles of Paul and the Gospel of John … offer us an historically reliable clue to the riddle of existence."[6] In Schelling's political-eschatological efforts to argue for a coming age of the perfect community as the culmination of human history, Christianity is "the future religion *par excellence* [since] Christianity will only be complete when the world becomes Church."[7]

The formal structure of *The Turn to the Positive* itself manifests the claim that McGrath is focused on making to some degree. We hence find the study subdivided into three parts or chapters that prefigure the *Turn* that is to be understood and undertaken: from the *Ideal* via a *Decision* to the *Real.*

The chapter entitled *The Ideal* starts off with a comparative analysis of the early Schelling and his nature-philosophy (Schelling I), which is, according to McGrath, distinct from yet joined to the late Schelling's work (Schelling II) via the hinge of the *Freedom Essay,* thus rendering Schelling neither schizophrenic nor uncreative: "For Schelling I, nature = reason = the absolute …. For Schelling II, nature is the ground of God, … the antecedent of a fully … personalised spirit. Reason … is no longer equal to God."[8] To show how these two modes of philosophy are formally related and quite different content-wise McGrath draws on what he calls Schelling's neo-Platonic logic, thus expanding his remarks on this topic already touched upon in *The Dark Ground of Spirit.*[9] This logic introduces hierarchical relations insofar as it shows how in every relation of a judgement the relation itself is not present as one of the relata. Thus in every judgement of identity or attribution there is "on the surface a triad (A=B), but in the depths, a tetrad, pointing towards some unknown and unknowable ground of determination."[10] As McGrath points out, moving from the triad of the judgement to the hidden fourth ungrounds the nature/God relation in Schelling. Nature, not being in itself, hence has to be grounded or to serve as ground for a higher reality, that is, the historical unfolding of the personality of the divine or divine personalisation. By focusing on Schelling's turn

[4] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 39.
[5] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 5.
[6] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 29.
[7] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 17.
[8] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 49f.
[9] McGrath, *The Dark Ground*, 23ff.
[10] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 57.

towards the theorization of a notion of the emergence of God from that which is not originally God as an archetype for natural becoming, McGrath develops what he calls religious naturalism as the repetition of divine becoming, i.e., theogony, in natural becoming, i.e., cosmogony. As the pinnacle of the chapter, "The Ideal," McGrath offers a condensed yet comprehensible and lucid analysis of Schelling's final doctrine of the potencies, which marks his final take on negative philosophy and thus philosophy proper insofar as it has not yet decided for (a historical confrontation with) the Real. McGrath shows that Schelling's doctrine of potencies can be read as "a theory of predication as well as a psychology because for Schelling, the principles of logic and the principles of psychology are principles of being."[11] Being ontological as well as psychological and thus properly logical McGrath traces the manifold consequences of Schelling's doctrine of potencies, which culminates in the insight that the potencies as "laws of thought are necessary according to essence but contingent according to existence, which means they are laws of being."[12] Since the potencies are also laws of thought they "can be elaborated purely negatively as a self-consistent system of reason."[13]

McGrath diagnoses that it is exactly this take on idealism as a purely negative system of reason that marks the difference between Hegel and Schelling. With the final doctrine of the potencies as a starting point, noting that "the late Schelling's own approach to logic, the negative philosophy of potencies, bears more than a passing resemblance to Hegel's,"[14] McGrath brings the two speculative thinkers into dialogue by contrasting their take on the relationship of logic to the world. Concerning one decisive and illuminating difference between the two philosophical giants McGrath writes that "Hegel blurs the distinction between the possible and the actual (essence and existence)"[15] mirroring the "failure to heed the distinction between … concept and its existential non-conceptual conditions … which so confuses history and reason as to domesticate the positivity of the former and occult the negativity of the latter."[16] McGrath additionally opposes Schelling's notion of personhood to Hegel's, arguing that Hegel "renders interpersonal relations necessary to individuation,"[17] while for Schelling these relations are "free relations, that is, they are each of them contingent on the good will of the persons involved."[18] According to Schelling, "it is not relations which personalise the individual … it is the freedom to enter into relation which personalises."[19] Finally, McGraths draws a line between the two thinkers concerning their take on religion, especially Trinitarian eschatology, which McGrath promises to discuss in detail in the sequel.

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[11] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 78.
[12] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 86.
[13] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 86.
[14] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 87.
[15] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 92.
[16] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 94.
[17] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 96.
[18] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 96.
[19] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 98.

In closing the chapter on "The Ideal," McGrath observes that "we are bound to admit a *practice* of the negative in Schelling, which is found wherever reason exists and struggles to order its living."[20] This practice, understood as an interiorisation of infinity and practice of transcendence, is a "spirituality of the present and for the present … an eternal spirituality, always and everywhere valid."[21] Hence this practice can be found at the pinnacle of almost all spiritual and philosophical systems of the East and West formulated and vindicated therein time and again by masters of non-duality.

The following chapter, "The Decision," marks the hinge to the "turn to the positive … the existential, but still hypothetical, acceptance of redemption"[22] and, consequently, McGrath's explicit take on Schelling's properly Christian speculations. The realm of the personal, be it human or divine, always already freely transcends reason insofar as "nothing is more free than personality. Knowledge of the personal … is strictly speaking revelation."[23] In turn, revelation is neither necessary nor natural but a free act of will which is freely recognised or freely not recognised. What is revealed in and through revelation then, McGrath concludes, is nothing other than freedom itself and thus with "the revelation of freedom, history is revealed, positive existence is revealed, and the contingency of being, the non-identity of essence and existence, is revealed."[24] According to McGrath Schelling takes the revealedness of revelation as a path to a possible solution to the search for the living God: "Schelling´s Philosophy of Revelation proposes to test the plausibility of a *positive* affirmation of the revelation."[25] This affirmation is radically non-conceptual, since it calls for a decision to step out of the self-containing negativity of pure thought. This "transition from the negative to the positive is an act of will that prefers the unknown and unknowable over the merely conceptual … a letting go of control, a letting be (*Gelassenheit*)."[26] As the presupposition of thought this act is the inversion of the ideal or the inverted idea in which the (positive) philosopher (to be) reenacts the primordial act of the absolute prius, i.e., God, in his decision for being. Thus what comes into sight is, as McGrath puts it, "the absolute fact, that there is something rather than nothing."[27] The strategy allows for a demonstration of Schelling's doctrine of potencies *per posterius*, meaning that the potencies are shown to be "the consequent 'logic' of history, a demonstration that remains fallibilist and explanatory,"[28] which is thus neither *a priori* and deductive nor *a posteriori* and inductive but abductive in balancing the *a priori* and *a posteriori* inclusively *per posterius*. Following along this line of thought, McGrath shows how the personal creator is proven indirectly by Schelling's

[20] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 114.
[21] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 115.
[22] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 131.
[23] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 133.
[24] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 134.
[25] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 135.
[26] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 142.
[27] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 144.
[28] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 153.

approach insofar as the "divinity of the act of being is … proven as the assumption that makes possible certain real facts … order in nature, the existence and history of spirit, and the fact of love."[29] The decisive turn to the positive can then be explained as an absolutely free act, since it is neither compelled by grace nor by an irrefutable proof and therefore does not culminate "in the security of possession but in silent astonishment (*Erstaunen*) before the fact of God's existence."[30] With Schelling, McGrath argues that an innovative understanding of faith is "the discovery that history is meaningful."[31]

McGrath's foregoing insights culminate in the chapter, "The Real." Here McGrath focuses his investigations around a deepening of the understanding of Schelling's late philosophy which is "nothing short of a progressive demonstration of the existence of that which alone is worthy of being called God."[32] Since McGrath understands Schelling's elaborations in his philosophy of revelation to be a philosophical appropriation and interpretation "of the singular divine revelation which is the event of Trinitarian redemption,"[33] he shows the immanent absolute freedom of the Christ event and its following historical effects as formulated in Schelling to be closely connected to secularisation. It is thus the Christian religion and its content, which is the singular person of Christ, that sets into motion a historical development "that can only end in the complete secularisation of the world and the total emancipation of the individual from mythic and historical religions."[34] In analyzing the significance of mythology in Schelling's positive philosophy, McGrath shows how, by freeing human religious consciousness from its mythological necessity to conceive the divine under a certain determinate form, Christianity introduces a religiosity that (freely) decides for the divine and thus a freedom "to worship or not to worship, which we can call secular consciousness."[35] In not condemning but vindicating paganism, mythology is shown to ground revelation insofar as "it supports revelation, makes it possible, and continues to nourish it … but as potency not actuality."[36] Mythology is a "collective experience of divinity, remembered and recounted in symbol and narrative, which determines the consciousness of a people." This is contrasted with the freedom of revelation that "does not *determine* consciousness; it confronts us in person … and demands of us a decision."[37] Closely entwined with the notion of the person and the notion of freedom in Schelling's late philosophy, the secularisation of the revelation also enacts the sacralisation of the secular and is understood by McGrath to be the aim and content of what Schelling calls "philosophical religion." With this religious secularism, as McGrath terms it,

[29] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 161.
[30] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 171.
[31] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 173.
[32] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 196.
[33] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 200.
[34] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 200.
[35] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 210.
[36] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 212.
[37] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 213.

Schelling "anticipates the restoration of the unity of the human race … a unity that allows to each and all the dignity and freedom of their own ethnic and religious origins." "The unity to come will be *by means of* ethnic, national and historical diversity."[38] In an emphatic political interpretation of Schelling's philosophy of ongoing revelation, McGrath completes his study with an extensive interpretation of the Church of St. John to come. Following the Church of Peter (conservative/real 1st potency) and Paul (expansive/ideal 2nd potency), the Church of John (dynamic 3rd potency) "is a vision of a future planetary civilisation that is pluralistically grounded in a fully secular appropriation of the revelation."[39] McGrath stresses that this does not mean an annihilation of the preceding movements of history nor the forgetting of the past of humanity for the sake of its future. Indeed, McGrath sees in Schelling the opposite of annihilation but active (co-)creation of the future at work for the final aim, "not more nationalism, but ecological universalism; not more sectarianism and protectionism, but greater trust, and reverence for our common home."[40]

As political eschatology McGrath understands this notion of the future of humanity not as a move within the sphere of the political as such, but the decisive and salvific transcendence of the political proper. McGrath thus reads the late Schelling's final political-eschatological remarks through the lens of a practical theology insofar as he understands the pinnacle of the religious life to be expressed in the active sublimation of the political, since only in "the absence of our heart's desire, we turn to the political."[41] In the sphere of the political, we require of society "support for our philosophical and religious pursuits." Schelling argues for "a form of governance that reflects this deepest need of human beings, for personal encounter with the divine."[42] In this way McGrath points out Schelling's conviction which holds together his *Philosophy of Mythology* and *Philosophy of Revelation,* which is "that all past human history converges on a single point, the redemption of the world in the Christ event, which points ahead to the final end of the human odyssey, the sanctification of the earth."[43]

Concluding this review we might state that, as McGrath admits in his introductory chapter, he is asking a lot of his readers. Yet it is precisely his refusal of simplification that makes this profound study speculative and a work that goes beyond a mere introduction to the late Schelling. McGrath's book is nothing less than a centrepiece of future Schelling scholarship and all thematically related authors and academic disciplines. As a final remark one might ask whether McGrath will also touch on the topic of individual salvation or *Seligkeit* that Schelling broaches towards the end of his *Stuttgart Seminars* and *Erlangen Lectures* as well as in the end passages of the *Philosophy of Revelation*. So far, McGrath has reconstructed and interpreted salvation and redemption in political terms, i.e., in terms of its general significance for the

[38] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 202f.
[39] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 224.
[40] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 225.
[41] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 232.
[42] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 232.
[43] McGrath, *The Turn to the Positive*, 238.

human future. The existential question with a focus on the individual insofar as he or she is not yet a (positive) philosopher remains to be discussed.

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Gedanken über die Religion: Der "stille" Krieg zwischen Schelling und Schleiermacher (1799–1807), by Ryan Scheerlinck. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-holzboog Verlag e.K., 2020. 221 pp., € 68.00, ISBN 9783772829307.

Reviewed by *Vicki Müller-Lüneschloß*

The title of Scheerlinck's study on the relationship between two of the most important thinkers of Romanticism, the philosopher F.W.J. Schelling and the theologian F.D.E. Schleiermacher, undoubtedly alludes to the latter's main work from 1799, the popular *Speeches On Religion*. This text, together with the 1807 dialogue, *Christmas Eve Celebration*, also written by Schleiermacher, defines the time frame of the investigation, which is understood as a visualization of a dialogue between two great minds, and not as an investigation into their mutual influences and dependencies.[1] Another thesis mentioned here is that the "silent war"[2] between these two thinkers, as Schleiermacher expressed it, extended over a much longer period of time, namely up to Schelling's late philosophy.[3] The main theme of the discussion, as Scheerlinck puts it, is revealed in the different attitudes of both thinkers to the relationship between theology and philosophy. While Schelling, from the point of view of his efforts towards a positive philosophy, advocates a scientific representation of Christianity,

[1] Ryan Scheerlinck, *Gedanken über die Religion. Der "stille" Krieg zwischen Schelling und Schleiermacher (1799–1807)* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog Verlag e.K., 2020), XIII.
[2] Scheerlinck, *Gedanken über die Religion*, XIn2.
[3] See Wolfgang Ullmann (Scheerlinck, *Gedanken über die Religion,* XII).

Schleiermacher strictly rejects a rational construction of religion. The presentation of this mutually stimulating exchange is predominantly based on "peripheral texts,"[4] i.e. texts that are less well known as they were written anonymously or published by the literary estates of the authors in question. This makes the already complex editorial situation confusing in some cases. The presentation is further limited to Schelling's perspective, whose following four works are laid out chronologically by Scheerlinck: the parodistic poem, *Heinz Widerporst's Epicurean Confession of Faith* (1799), which also contains an early critical reaction to Schleiermacher's *Speeches*; the *Lectures on the Method of Academic Study* (1803), to which Schleiermacher responded with a review; Schelling's review, *Christmas Eve Celebration* (1807), which discusses Schleiermacher's dialogue of the same title; the dialogue *Clara* or *On nature's connection to the Spirit World*, subsequently analysed by Scheerlinck with the greatest attention.

The chapter, "The Epicurean," reconstructs the context in which Schelling's poem was drafted in the network of the early Jena Romantics. The poem contains a criticism of the efforts to renew religion as expressed in Novalis' Fragment, *Christianity or Europe,* and Schleiermacher's *Speeches*. In the poem's "conceptual figure," Heinz Widerporst, Scheerlinck identifies less an intellectual critic representing a doctrine than "the embodiment of the way of life implied or required by a doctrine," which is directed with "affect" against the ideal of the "human type" of Schleiermacher and Novalis.[5] In the end, Widerporst is also looking for a new religion, which, however, does not coincide with the ideas of those two thinkers. Against a religion centered purely on spirit, Widerporst depicts a religion of sensuality, intellect, and the intuition of nature. Such a religion will have freed itself from the immature "fear" of the unknown (the "giant spirit" qua "earth spirit"), an achievement which the author interprets as man's insight into his identity with nature, as well as inversely into nature's spiritual essence.[6] Scheerlinck recognizes the 'Epicurean' trait of the *Confession of Faith* in the way it founds religion on the intuition or philosophy of nature, which at the same time stands for a scientific knowledge of religion such as Schleiermacher's position resolutely contradicts.

With Schelling's repeated reading of the *Speeches* in 1801 and the associated change in his judgment, the "silent war" takes off again. The chapter, "The Herald," takes up Schelling's praise of Schleiermacher in the seventh lecture of his *On University Studies* (SW5: 207-352). This initial praise, however, develops over the following two lectures into a criticism or a "counter-proposal to Schleiermacher's determination of religion."[7] Here Scheerlinck advances the thesis that Schelling's reading of the *Speeches* may have inspired him to write the eight lecture, on religion. While Schleiermacher adheres to the primacy and independence of (Christian) religion, primarily defined by intuition and feeling, Schelling argues that theology should be grounded as a science. To do so, it should adopt the form of a historical construction of Christianity aiming

[4] Scheerlinck, *Gedanken über die Religion*, XV.
[5] Scheerlinck, *Gedanken über die Religion*, 6.
[6] Scheerlinck, *Gedanken über die Religion*, 12–14.
[7] Scheerlinck, *Gedanken über die Religion*, 27.

to identify Christianity as the one true religion. For the philosopher, this project is prefigured in the (intellectual) intuition of the absolute in nature and history, which thus recognizes both polytheism (mythology) and Christianity as forms of revelation. Schleiermacher's reply follows with his review of *On University Studies* one year after its publication. The focus is on his understanding of Christ. The theologian denies Schelling's idea of "reconciliation," according to which Christ symbolizes both the climax of the old world of gods and the turning point to the new world in combination with the idea of a timeless Christianity, which undermines the historical uniqueness of the birth of Christ as an event. Criticizing the ideal or mythological character of this speculative construction, Schleiermacher demands "support by a historical individual." He recognizes the demand for a theology of history, which, in"high arbitrariness," Schelling "disregards."[8]

In 1806 Schleiermacher's dialog, *Christmas Eve Celebration,* appeared, which Scheerlinck considers to be an answer to Schelling's construction of Christianity in *University Studies.* Schelling's review of Schleiermacher's new text followed in 1807. The chapter, "The Educated Despiser," analyzes this renewed exchange of blows, which, according to Scheerlinck, represents the "breakthrough" of the "decisive difference"[9] between the two thinkers: the "concept of fall" or the idea of "redemption." Among the various speeches of the *Christmas Eve Celebration*, the querulous figure of Leonhardt stands out, obviously bearing traits of Schelling's position. As a representative of a rationalistic criticism of religion, Leonhardt, like Schelling, supports a mythical understanding of Christianity that is derived from the lack of historical facts. At the same time, however, the "idea of the Redeemer" falls away, insofar as it is linked to a unique historical event. Ernst, on the other hand, emphasizes the "human need for redemption." His speech is followed by the historical theological draft of Eduard, who claims that the discrepancy between appearance and idea, caused by the "fall" and ensnaring the individual, can only be removed by redemption.[10] Schelling's review, unsurprisingly, centres on the figure of Leonhardt, from whose point of view the philosopher undertakes a critical analysis of the family members present and their constellation with one another. His review thus amounts to an "apology of Leonhardt."

In this way, Schelling criticizes the religious practices of the discussants, whom he accuses of a "lack of universality" and "subjectivity" due to their Protestant culture, their exclusion of philosophy or their emotional bigotry.[11] Schelling's understanding of the idea of Christianity, interpreted by Scheerlinck as 'mythical,' differs sharply from Schleiermacher's position. The latter insists on historicity, and advances an 'empirical' understanding of those themes Schelling treated as concepts of reason, namely *redemption*, *fall* and the *church*. In Schelling's opinion, this approach leads to various inconsistencies. For example, the concept of the church as a remedy leading

[8] Scheerlinck, *Gedanken über die Religion*, 53f.
[9] Scheerlinck, *Gedanken über die Religion*, 55.
[10] Scheerlinck, *Gedanken über die Religion*, 61–63.
[11] Scheerlinck, *Gedanken über die Religion*, 73–76.

to salvation is not compatible with the idea of an empirical institution, since the difference among believers from the world of ideas caused by the fall continues to exist.

The fourth and final chapter of the study is entitled "The Teacher,"[12] and is devoted to Schelling's dialogue, *Clara* or *On Nature's Connection to the Spirit World*. The setting of this text, which includes conversations about the immortality of the soul, is autumn in the country, on Christmas Eve, and at the threshold of spring. It is clearly reminiscent of Schleiermacher's *Christmas Eve Celebration*. Scheerlinck's interpretation contradicts the common thesis on the dating of this fragment, which is usually associated with Caroline's death in the fall of 1809. Instead, he cites various pieces of evidence that place it in the context of Schelling's writings on the philosophy of identity (*Philosophy and Religion* (1804), *Bruno* (1802), and others. Remarkable are the reflections on the way the contents of the three conversations in *Clara* are structured, which Scheerlinck places in analogy with the gradual introduction into the mysteries, as it is carried out in *Bruno* and presented in *Philosophy and Religion* respectively. With regard to this schema, however, Clara does not reach the highest level of "imageless watching" according to Scheerlinck, which is why the dialogue remains a fragment.[13]

Scheerlinck also surprises us with new views on the constellation of the three figures in the dialogue. Thus, he suggests that the speeches delivered by the priest and the doctor proceed with the "intention" of having a "salutary or edifying" effect on Clara. At the same time, this interpretation undermines these dialogues' claim to "truth."[14] Scheerlinck considers the supposed "mission" of leading Clara out of her rapturous melancholy "back to nature and thus placing her on the basis without which access to the spirit world cannot be found" to have ultimately failed, since the character Clara "hardly undergoes any development."[15] This creates the impression of a dystopian educational novel that does not culminate in the "transfiguration" of the protagonist in mind or the intellectual appropriation of the knowledge of immortality that Clara feels in herself, but rather in her death. Scheerlinck thus casts doubt on the scholarship viewing the dialogue as a "second *Phaedo*" (Hubert Beckers, Xavier Tilliette),[16] just as he sees the real topic of the dialogue less in the question of the "immortality of the soul" than in the "problem of the transition from nature to the spirit world." [17]

The interpretation of the figure of Clara as a "non-philosopher,"[18] embodying the "natural or pre-philosophical consciousness," which at the same time can be understood as a "mythicizing,"[19] as well as the associated reference to natural theology, are convincing. Unfortunately, Scheerlinck only briefly touches on the

[12] Scheerlinck, *Gedanken über die Religion*, 87-195.
[13] Scheerlinck, *Gedanken über die Religion*, 119–121.
[14] Scheerlinck, *Gedanken über die Religion*, 106.
[15] Scheerlinck, *Gedanken über die Religion*, 111f.
[16] Scheerlinck, *Gedanken über die Religion*, 118.
[17] Scheerlinck, *Gedanken über die Religion*, 94f.
[18] Scheerlinck, *Gedanken über die Religion*, 121.
[19] Scheerlinck, *Gedanken über die Religion*, 185.

methodology of the maieutic process, which is so typical of Socratic dialogue, and it could be addressed more strongly. Such a reading would not only change the constellation of the three interlocutors shown here, but also the interpretation of Clara's course of education, which is drawn in a rather negative way. The nameless doctor and the priest, who is only referred to as the narrator, actually provide Clara with the means or tools available in natural philosophy and theology to translate the knowledge she feels in herself into concepts and make it visible to the inner eye. The representation of philosophy of nature by the doctor and theology by the priest finally raises the question: Who is Clara?

Scheerlinck clearly worked out the essential characteristic of the central theme of the text, the presentation of the doctrine of immortality, which can be identified as a Christian anthropology. It is the "desire for wholeness"[20] that is expressed in people. Above all, this desire refers to the preservation of corporality in the "triad of body, soul and spirit", which in turn contrasts with the ancient idea of a "dyad of body and soul."[21] A striking application of these opposing positions to the doctrine of immortality, as developed by Schelling in the writings of his early identity-philosophy such as *Philosophy and Religion* and the *System of the Whole of Philosophy and of Philosophy of Nature in Particular* (1804), on the one hand, and on the other, in the *Stuttgart Seminars* (1810), which belongs to Schelling's later philosophy of freedom, could, however, just as well make another reading of *Clara* plausible with a later dating than the one suggested here.

Scheerlinck sees the relation of Schelling's *Clara* to Schleiermacher's *Christmas Eve Celebration* less in the 'feeling' provided for the philosophy of faith with an epistemic value than in Schelling's "political" aspirations:[22] He sought to make the natural theology represented by Clara's perspective fruitful for overcoming Schleiermacher's distinction between the 'educated' and the 'uneducated.'

While the "silent war" between the philosopher and the theologian on view in their writings also ends with the works listed here, this should not prevent today's reader from following, on Scheerlinck's recommendation, the consequences of the dialogue thereby initiated in the authors' subsequent works. It would then be possible to read Schelling's late philosophy as a "radical alternative" to Schleiermacher's *Christian Faith*.[23]

[20] Scheerlinck, *Gedanken über die Religion*, 147–176.
[21] Scheerlinck, *Gedanken über die Religion*, 157–160.
[22] Scheerlinck, *Gedanken über die Religion*, 204f.
[23] Scheerlinck, *Gedanken über die Religion*, 85f., 197f.