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To Be or Not to Be? Schelling's Multidimensional Logic of Being and Non-Being

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Schelling's *Philosophy of the Ages of the World*, which he developed from 1810 until the 1820s, still holds a special appeal for readers today: The countless drafts and notes, never brought into a published version by Schelling, bear witness to an incessant struggle with language and thought, and at the same time can be counted among the most ambitious texts Schelling produced. Schelling's frequent use of images and metaphors in these texts makes it difficult to recognize the logical and dialectical structures operative in them. However, it will be shown in what follows that these structures are indeed operative and that the text does not proceed merely associatively. In his *Philosophy of the Ages of the World*, Schelling drafts a new dialectical logic that can and must be placed alongside that of Hegel. Yet, Schelling does not only conceive the logic in terms of an ontology (as does Hegel), but also integrates descriptions relating to will and intuition. These descriptions are not only intended to facilitate the reader's understanding, but are part of the essence of the logical development itself.

This paper is divided into three parts: The first part outlines the basic idea of Schelling's volitional-ontological logic. At least since the publication of the *Freedom Essay*, one can establish that Schelling identifies original being (*Ursein*) with willing. Ontological and ontic relations display a logical structure that the philosopher cannot grasp by way of formal logic alone; they must be translated back into volitional relations. Nevertheless, they follow a development

according to laws made intelligible by a theory of predication and dialectic that Schelling will later call a “dialectic of freedom.”¹ In the second part, I will reconstruct Schelling’s logic by considering all of his texts comprising the *Philosophy of the Ages of the World*. This section intends to clarify the initial relations of being and non-being in their peculiarity and development. In clarifying this himself, Schelling assigns a specific place to these categories in different constellations and makes their interplay in an initial becoming clear. An occasional comparative glance at Hegel will discover similarities as well as differences. The last part of the paper is devoted to the question of to what extent Schelling’s logic can still be useful today with respect to formal logic and other philosophical logics. It will be shown what are the advantages and disadvantages of this understanding. Especially the failure of a (final) formalization, e.g., in Schelling’s theory of the potencies, will be interpreted as a stepping stone to taking a critical, controversial look at this part of Schelling’s philosophy.

The Idea of Schelling’s Dialectical Logic: To Be or Not to Be

There are several reasons why it is so difficult to grasp Schelling’s idea of a logic. Some of these have already been mentioned: Schelling often uses images and not strictly conceptual language, transferring an anthropomorphic description, such as that of the will, to the Absolute or God. The development of the will in particular does not follow a strictly necessary process; rather, Schelling often emphasizes that it is freedom and not necessity that determines its progress.

Furthermore, Schelling uses many concepts, or rather pairs of concepts, whose relationship to one another he does not clarify: there are pairs such as subject and object, ideal and real, essence and form, existent and non-existent, ground and existent, etc., and it seems obvious to identify one side of each of these pairs with terms in a similar relative position, i.e., in the sense that subject = ideal = essence = existent. However, many passages also indicate that the concepts have different connotations. In contrast to this, Hegel’s logic assigns these concepts a clear place within his system, whereby a hierarchy, a development of concepts, becomes evident.

In Schelling’s logic, on the other hand, the meanings of concepts can only be clarified in their respective contexts. Moreover, even the same concept takes on different meanings in different contexts. Accordingly, it is impossible

¹ See Christoph Binkelman, “‘Wirkliche Dialektik ist nur im Reiche der Freiheit.’ Die Dialektik des Positiven in Schellings Berliner Antrittsvorlesung,” in *Schelling-Studien* 4 (2016): 101–18.

to define the concept, e.g., of the subject, once and for all in Schelling's philosophy. Rather, each concept contains several meanings that may or may not be valid depending on the context. And I am not here talking about texts from different periods of Schelling's life, e.g., the concept of subject in his Philosophy of Identity as opposed to the concept of subject in his late philosophy. Even in a single text, the meanings of concepts are constantly changing.

In order to understand this change, it is not enough to pursue purely logical transitions. Rather, the change in the meanings of one and the same concept depends on the change in constellations of will. Why this is the case and how exactly it is to be understood will be traced in the following, primarily on the basis of one pivotal pair of concepts in the *Ages of the World*: namely being and non-being.²

Schelling's Logic of Being in *The Ages of the World*

Schelling's *The Ages of the World* aims to provide a science of reality that understands reality not as something static—as immutable being—but as “universal life,” i.e., in the sense of temporal or historical development. Accordingly, it is the task of knowledge to “grasp the connection of movement from the beginning to the end.”³ For Schelling, as for Hegel, this movement of universal life begins with the immanent differentiation of the Absolute (or the Godhead), which ultimately leads to the creation of a world in nature and spirit. The latter was to be the subject of the second book of *The Ages of the World*.

The fundamental tendency of life consists—borrowed from the metaphor of plants—in an unfolding from the depths or the ground into the revealed or the external. Knowledge does not objectively observe this unfolding, but is itself part of it as the most explicit revelation. The historicity of life, therefore, is found in knowledge itself, which by no means consists in asserting discrete truths such as “S is p,” but rather in *passing through* propositions (such as from “S is p” to “S is q,” etc.) in a dialectical way. The particular propositions are not true in themselves, but only as part of their movement do they acquire their relative truth. Due to this historicity of knowledge, the highest science must also move from the deepest depths of historical movement, i.e., from the most distant past, in order ultimately to produce a “system of times.” If one undertakes to unearth the basic structure

² In the following I will translate Schelling's concepts of “Sein” und “Seiendes” into English using the terms *being* and *existent*, respectively.

³ Archive of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, *Schelling Nachlass*, no. 81, 1r (my translation).

of this movement of universal life, one comes across the “law of ascension,” which, as Schelling boasts, he himself, “as one who has invented so little, may well address as my invention in philosophy”.⁴ The ascension consists precisely in the continuous potentiation of life, the moments of which constitute the potencies.

How is the beginning to be made in this movement? Schelling shares the problem of the beginning with his earlier colleague Hegel. Like Hegel in his *Science of Logic*, Schelling repeatedly deals with this problem in the *Weltalter* manuscripts, but less reflexively than performatively. In addition, Schelling distinguishes between four periods of the beginning: the first period is still before the beginning and deals with “the First one” (1); the second period serves to prepare the beginning (2). The third period is the beginning in a proper sense (3), which, however, only begins in the fourth period: the beginning of the beginning (4). To illustrate this, you can imagine a car driving off: the first period (1) represents the car itself, the second (2) involves turning the ignition key (i.e., starting the engine), followed by stepping on the gas (3), which leads to the wheels only spinning. It is only in the fourth period (4) that the wheels find their grip and set the car in motion. A further similarity with Hegel is that Schelling thinks of this beginning in terms of the categories of being and the non-being, which enter into different relationships with each other in the different periods.

Now, let’s start the car.

First period: The first one (or, the car itself)

According to Schelling, the “First one” cannot be addressed as an existent determined something, nor is it the non-existent in the sense of the nothing from which—here he is and remains a Spinozist—nothing can become and therefore begin (*ex nihilo nihil fit*). In this respect, Schelling calls it a super-existent (*Überseiendes*). But at the same time, insofar as it is not non-existent, it is existent and, insofar as it is not existent, it is non-existent. Schelling finds this entanglement of neither (existent)—nor (non-existent) and as-well (existent)—as (non-existent) expressed in the idea of indifference (*Gleichgültigkeit*). Yet the primacy of the first view (of neither—nor) prevails, and is expressed in the fact that in *essence* (*Wesen*) it is neither existent nor non-existent, but in *form* or possibility it can be both. Here, as it were, the first still-weak concept of potency emerges in the sense of a possibility (power), from which the dynamics (*dynamis*) of movement are launched shortly thereafter: The First one is thus “pure indifference, the unconditional unity of subject and

⁴ Archive of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, *Schelling Nachlass*, no. 95, 98v (my translation).

object [existent and non-existent; C.B.], since it is neither of the two and yet the power to both.”⁵ Schelling explains this by referring to the concepts of essence and form. Accordingly, the First one is the unity of essence and being (=form), which is why the *as-well-as* is only present in pure potentiality, as ability; it has not yet stepped out of its unity with essence. The formula of $A=A$ can be used to schematize this. But Schelling is concerned with more than a purely logical understanding, since he critically objects— certainly with Hegel in mind: “There are enough people who would like to dissolve everything, even the deepest things, into representation (*Vorstellung*). But it is not representation, it is desire that comes first. Desire is the First one.”⁶ Understood in this voluntative sense, the First one is therefore the “will that wills nothing, or that does not will.” It is “eternal freedom.”

Second period: Preparing the beginning (or, starting the engine)

Therefore, the indifference, the First one, can be interpreted as a *libertas indifferentiae*, which, however, does not make its beginning out of conscious arbitrariness, but rather in accidental arbitrariness. From this First one, the beginning of the movement now prepares itself as follows: According to the very meaning of the word, the beginning cannot be a giving, communicating, overflowing etc., but there is a capturing (*Fang*) in the beginning (*Anfang*), i.e., a taking or attracting. But since there is nothing else in the beginning, eternal freedom can only attract, take, want *itself*. It turns itself into a project (*Vorwurf*), by which Schelling, however, again does not want to understand merely a theoretical object, but an object of desire, a “bait” (*Lockspeise*). Likewise, the transition from eternal freedom to beginning is not a logical, necessary movement, but one of free, groundless decision, which does not happen consciously, but seems fateful. For eternal freedom is condemned to itself; it is its own necessity (without, of course, knowing so at this point). The original subject-object indifference—the unity of freedom and necessity— thus gives rise to a duality: that which attracts and that which is attracted.

The transition from unity to duality now also entails a new potency: $A=A$ becomes $A=B$. It is important to consider the following: According to Schelling, that which attracts is B; that which is attracted is A. This could be surprising at first, insofar as in $A=B$, an equation that Schelling (like Fichte, or even more so) understands as a predication—A (i.e., the attracted) is the subject, while B (the attracting) is the object or predicate. In the proposition “A is B,” the subject has the role of *the inner, the hidden essence*, which is expressed

⁵ Archive of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, *Schelling Nachlass*, no. 81, 3r (my translation).

⁶ Archive of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, *Schelling Nachlass*, no. 81, 6r (my translation).

by the predicate in *the outer, the revealing form*. Taken together and understood voluntarily, eternal freedom, by willing itself, is encompassed as the willed in the will: “The general expression of self-attraction or also of the first form is (A=B) instead of A=A, whereby it is indicated that the essence or being (A) is here the enclosed captured, while the will or desire (B) the enclosing embracing.”⁷

In A=B (in the duality) the original unity, the A=A, is thus also contained to a certain extent as the “actual subject of this something,” which is both revealed and concealed by the form:

In this respect it [the unity; A=A] now presents itself as that uncognizable entity of which the ancient philosophers already said that it is neither cognizable with the form nor without the form. For insofar as it is outside the form, it is beyond all cognition, because without all expression and revelation. But as soon as it is within the form, it is covered by it; it is the inner and hidden. Yet the form or duality is its revelation. Thus, one can also say that it is only revealed as something hidden, that it is only cognized as something uncognizable, that it is only known by not actually being known (*ignorando cognoscitur*).⁸

In A=B, being and non-being now also have a different relationship than before (in A=A). In this actually first real period of development, because the First one itself is still, as it were, beyond any development, a first, still-hesitant, not yet completely clear differentiation of the categories “existent” and “non-existent” begins. Thus, on the one hand, what is attracted, insofar as it is willed, is posited as non-existent—but only according to the concept or intention is it existent (the existent idea of a non-existent of which one wants it to exist). On the other hand, by wanting it to exist, the will turns itself into something non-existent, for it is driven by a lack. A non-existent wants to be existent. But even the willing is not merely non-existent: for “by really wanting something, it does not only want to be existent but is existent.”⁹ As in the case of indifference, there is also an ambivalence or entanglement of being and non-being (existent and non-existent) on both sides, yet this does not lead to falling back into unity, but is clearly decided by virtue of the will. The main tendency of the will lies in the transition from non-existence to existence. Eternal freedom wants itself *as such*, i.e., as existent, because it itself neither is nor was.

⁷ Archive of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, *Schelling Nachlass*, no. 83, 10r–v (my translation).

⁸ Archive of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, *Schelling Nachlass*, no. 81, 6v (my translation).

⁹ Archive of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, *Schelling Nachlass*, no. 81, 5r (my translation).

True eternal freedom, that which matters to the will, the essence, is therefore not that which attracts, but that which is attracted. In this, however, eternal freedom “feels” itself to be “captured by its own will.”

For eternal freedom, form is, as it were, the magic circle that it can no longer break through. However, that is precisely why it is inside it, as the one that does not know what is happening to it; that is why duality or form is for it the unforeseen, the unexpected, the unwanted, which it can only experience as something that has been thrust upon it, only as a destiny.¹⁰

I have already indicated that the transition from *libertas indifferentiae* is not a conscious, free transition in which God, unlike Buridan’s donkey, can choose one of the two haystacks—to be or not to be. Rather, the transition is blind, fateful, an incident that of course does not come from outside, from evil-minded gods—for there is (so far) nothing external to God—but rather happens to freedom through itself: This is where the mythological component in Schelling’s development of the Absolute becomes clear, taking on dimensions of a tragedy. Without wanting to, freedom finds itself in the grasp of fate. Yet the will in which eternal freedom is caught is also its own will, only it does not recognize it as such. Already in the First one, freedom and necessity were intertwined and one: freedom was its own destiny. Now, in the emerging duality, both moments are more opposed to each other—and all that remains for freedom is to realize (to “give birth to”) itself in its destiny, i.e., *in the necessity of being wanted*. In this way, it is in accordance with fate—admittedly again without knowing it—which also wants its realization, *its transition into being*.

Third period: The beginning (or, the rotating of the wheels)

The new period in the development of potencies that is now beginning deserves special attention, as it has not yet been clearly identified in research due to the lack of a textual basis: Up to now, the First one we had, so to speak, was the potenceless $A=A$ (1), from which the first potency $A=B$ (2) emerged. The development now still to be expected consists in the fact that the essence $A=A$ is *posited as existent*, i.e., it is realized. This will take place insofar as it rises above $A=B$ —not only as a simple A , but as an A *posited as existent*, i.e., as A^2 , only to be truly posited as such in the union with $A=B$ in A^3 . So much for the intention, but in reality we are still at a lower level: eternal freedom undertakes the attempt to realize itself in the form, in $A=B$. From this, however, still-

¹⁰ Archive of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, *Schelling Nachlass*, no. 81, 7r (my translation).

dependent forms of the major potencies emerge: the so-called minor potencies.

In numerous fragments of the *Ages of the World*, Schelling deals with the crucial distinction between major and minor potencies, which can only be properly understood if these fragments are placed in relation to one another. One short unpublished fragment in particular is very helpful for our purpose: according to this fragment, eternal freedom as that which is attracted lies in the darkness of the form that surrounds it, i.e., in the duality of A=B, with which it struggles in order to realize itself as eternal freedom. A return to mere purity and indifference is no longer possible: “So there is only one thing left for it to do: to make the something that it is (the form, the attractedness, [...]) external to itself at least, [...] as the mere something *of* itself, to set itself against it as the existent of this something.”¹¹

A far-reaching distinction takes place here, which will also be applied to the major potencies: In order to be as a unity, eternal freedom establishes itself in difference from its form, which is responsible for its duality. More precisely, eternal freedom seeks to realize itself—to free itself from mere being-wanted—in order to establish itself as existent. For this to happen, the form itself must first be posited as non-existent, for the existence of the form (of the will) is precisely the condition for the non-existence of freedom. In order to elevate itself as existing, it posits the form as non-existent—but not as nothing, otherwise freedom could not elevate itself as existing, but would fall back into the first indifference (which, according to Schelling, is not possible at all). Here a new, once again differentiated relationship between being and non-being emerges: Whereas in the previous period, the will rendered something non-existent by willing it, i.e., by positing it internally, now the essence turns the form into a non-existent by positing it “respectively” (i.e., relative to itself), externally, as a non-existent. It posits it “as something of itself,” as Schelling writes, i.e., as something that is not itself, but is nevertheless *of* itself—as it were, a part of itself. This part, however, is yet something other than itself (to illustrate this, Schelling occasionally alludes to the biblical myth of the creation of woman from the rib of man).

However, in a more logical understanding, a new relationship between being and non-being opens up here, in that the non-existent now becomes the ground on which the existent rises. Schelling’s distinction between the ground of existence and the existent, which he has been promoting since the *Freedom Essay*, finds its categorial-genetic location here: the non-existent is now that on which the existent is founded as its substratum. As Schelling never gets tired of emphasizing by referring to Plato’s *Sophistes*, existent and non-existent are

¹¹ Archive of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, *Schelling Nachlass*, no. 86, 25r (my translation).

relative terms, whereby the following applies: everything is existent or non-existent depending on the relation; there is nothing that is only non-existent, and insofar as something is non-existent, it is being for another. Looking back to the First one, where essence and being were still in indifferent unity, both are now separated from each other: *the existing essence and its basis of being, without being completely separated from each other*—the ground is only the ground of the existent and the existent is only existing on and through the ground..

Two aspects of this development inevitably draw attention: first, the unity under or in duality attempts to realize itself as unity, which is why the external positing also takes place within $A=B$. Schelling therefore describes the externally posited form as $a=b$, i.e., as a minor potency; the elevation as existent above this as a^2 . Secondly, the unity in this way obviously falls prey to a new duality, namely that of the two minor potencies mentioned, such that a^3 is required as the third potency, since only in this movement, in the unity of $a=b$ and a^2 , is the duality overcome:

We call this form stripped of essence and reduced to mere externality, to being, by $(a=b)$, the essence that rises against it to existence by a^2 . However, once begun, the progression does not stand still here; but the essence enclosed in $A=B$ turns duality, as it were, into the suffering, feminine of itself, and progresses itself into the existent, as it were masculine, only to show itself by means of that and to rise above both as the purer, as it were sexless essence; in itself neither existent nor non-existent ($=a^3$), which is nevertheless as such.¹²

There is a qualitative change here, which one of the fragments brings to the fore: Whereas in the major potency, the $A=B$, the attracting B was still a quite indeterminate willing of eternal freedom, the will has now—in minor b—become concrete and activated: Schelling therefore calls the will in B the craving (*Sucht*) or longing (*Sehnsucht*) as the will that is not yet determined. This is how Fichte and the early Romantics addressed it. In b, on the other hand, desire (*Begierde*) arises:

As we have already said, what we call craving is more of a suffering process in itself and relates to the aroused desire (we call it b to indicate the relationship and the difference from craving or B) as mere hunger relates to the active seizing, taking hold of and consuming of the

¹² Archive of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, *Schelling Nachlass*, no. 86, 25r (my translation).

material offered. The difference is also that the craving is one with the essence, but the aroused attracting desire is in opposition to it.¹³

Consequently, the will also differentiates or concretizes itself further at this point: from the will that does not want, via the still quite undefined longing to desire—all these are, of course, still unconscious forms of will.

At this stage of development, the movement also finds its actual beginning, i.e., the beginning only begins to be such a beginning. However, this is afflicted with certain shortcomings, or rather, contradictions, which will ultimately contribute to overcoming it. This is necessary, since only in this manner can the beginning also be the beginning (of something). With regard to the potencies, this means as follows: In order to realize itself, the essence has first posited the first potency $a=b$ outside itself as its ground so that it can rise to existence (a^2). Beyond this, the existing indifference (a^3) finally emerges. For only this is the existing indifference of the existing (a^2) and non-existing ($a=b$), and thus realizes the original freedom. Yet because the first potency is already outside of eternal freedom, this also applies to the potencies following it, which are only then when the previous potencies are. The first potency cannot be as such, namely as ground, unless the second ex-sists; both in turn cannot be otherwise “than by positing the unity as the third (a^3) outside itself,”¹⁴ and the latter cannot be without the antithesis, whereby it literally returns to the first potency and closes the cycle, rotation, or wheel (all these are terms of Schelling’s). Each potency, in order to exist, presupposes the previous potency as existent, but by positing itself, it posits the latter as non-existent—as its being—and thus negates itself as existent, i.e., posits itself as non-existent and thus posits the potency following it, to which it serves as non-existent, i.e., as being, in order for the latter to exist. In this way, an infinite movement results, albeit not a progression, but a circular course.

This rotation, which Schelling also describes with the biblical term the “wheel of birth” (*trochos geneseos*), illustrates how *becoming* (*Werden*) arises from being and non-being (this can therefore also be seen as a counterpart to Hegel’s logic):

This rotation is indescribable because it does not stop anywhere, it is only there in motion. Wherever you want to grip the wheel, to bring it to a standstill, it will be disturbed. For it is nothing but an eternal

¹³ Archive of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, *Schelling Nachlass*, no. 96, 10r (my translation).

¹⁴ Archive of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, *Schelling Nachlass*, no. 81, 8v (my translation).

becoming without all being, the life that ceaselessly consumes itself and gives birth again and again.¹⁵

Even if we are still in the immanent development of the Absolute here, there is nonetheless an analogy with becoming in nature, so that we can refer not only to Hegel's logic, but also to his phenomenology. In Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, desire becomes a new desire in every apparent fulfillment (according to Goethe's dictum): "From desire I rush to satisfaction; from satisfaction I leap to desire." In Schelling, too, desire is involved in a permanent turmoil. The comparison goes even further: As with Hegel, this cycle of nature in Schelling is a first failing attempt to establish self-reference, which is only overcome and elevated in self-consciousness.¹⁶ Eternal freedom also strives to posit itself as existent and therein to become for itself: "But the initial for itself is necessarily unconscious, although one incessantly struggling for consciousness."¹⁷

This is the beginning: "Violent but futile endeavor to get out of the successive into the simultaneous is the necessary first thing in every beginning (including the eternal)."¹⁸ "How or by what means was life redeemed from this rotation and led into freedom?"¹⁹ or in other words: "It is necessary that what is incomprehensible in itself, if it nevertheless wants to grasp itself, gets caught up in this rotation. Yet must it necessarily remain in it? Eternal agony is unthinkable; but how can it escape the torment?"²⁰ I will now only briefly comment on this exciting question of how the major potencies, especially A², will emerge.

Fourth period: The beginning of the beginning (or, the car is driving)

From the vicious circle of becoming, the linear, progressive becoming now emerges in the fourth step and therefore the actual, real beginning of the movement takes place. This presupposes a real separation or decision, a

¹⁵ Archive of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, *Schelling Nachlass*, no. 96, 12r (my translation).

¹⁶ See Christoph Binkelman, "Self-preservation and self-consciousness. Hegel's critique of a Spinozian concept," in E. Balsemao Pires (ed.), *Still Reading Hegel: After 200 years of the Phenomenology of Spirit* (Coimbra: Coimbra University Press 2009), 65–73.

¹⁷ Archive of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, *Schelling Nachlass*, no. 95, 122v (my translation).

¹⁸ Archive of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, *Schelling Nachlass*, no. 95, 122r (my translation).

¹⁹ Archive of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, *Schelling Nachlass*, no. 95, 124r (my translation).

²⁰ Archive of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, *Schelling Nachlass*, no. 83, 14r (my translation).

separation of the potencies, which Schelling calls “crisis” (*Krisis*). In that $A=B$ makes itself the substratum, i.e., the being, A^2 can rise above it. Through the crisis, a clear, permanent subordination of being to the existent now occurs for the first time. Being is the ground, the existent is that which rises by subordinating being. There was already a first, still small, i.e., unstable distinction between the ground and the existent in the rotation. However, this distinction permanently collapsed. In rotation, what is ground immediately becomes the existent again and vice versa.

As we have already seen in the rotation, Schelling insists that this subordination, and thus the meaning of the concepts, are only relative. That which is the being of the other is itself also an existent; only in relation to the other existent is it a being and thus a non-existent. With this new definition of the existent and non-existent, Schelling attains a level that enables progression in the potencies for the first time. However, this does not prevent the earlier definitions of the pair of concepts from reappearing: Rotation is found not only in the becoming of universal nature, but also in the movement of the planets or the mythology of Zabism. The new order of potencies, on the contrary, is found in the Christian Trinity. The paternal power (the B in $A=B$) begets the Son (A^2) and thereby also first becomes the Father ($A=B$). To find a shortcut for our car: only with Jesus Christ did we find a driver for the car—but car and driver only merge into one with the Spirit, as is always the case for good drivers.

Conclusion: Schelling’s Cotextualist Practical Logic

What are we to do with this logic of Schelling’s, which was only hinted at in this paper? Let’s start with the advantages. Schelling presents a dynamic logic in which judgments and concepts only acquire their meaning in the whole of the movement. One could speak of a logical contextualism. Since the concepts in particular occur within several contexts, they take on a multidimensional meaning. When Schelling thematizes the existent in different places, it is not a matter of mere equivocal use. Rather, it is the same concept that has different layers of meaning. Schelling therefore takes the Aristotelian *pollachos legetai* of being seriously and develops it in a systematic and extremely complex way.

The meaning of the concepts is not only revealed in the performative reconstruction of the universal movement. The performative in it is genuinely practical. We cannot speak of the existent in a purely theoretical manner, as an object of knowledge. What the existent is only reveals itself through a volitional approach. It is the will that determines the meanings of being. Schelling thus radicalizes the primacy of the practical even more than does Fichte toward Kant. For Schelling’s entire logic (i.e., ontology) is practical. This approach of

a contextualist practical logic seems to me to be extremely innovative and still worthy of attention today.

This brings us to a disadvantage that Schelling himself probably intuited the most: The fact that the meaning of the concepts arises from their context and their connection with the will makes it extremely difficult—if not impossible—to formalize them. In the period of his *Philosophy of the Ages of the World*, Schelling struggled to develop the doctrine of potency as the backbone of his system—sometimes with major, sometimes with minor potencies and with many variations. In the end, he probably failed in the first place because of this and thus never published the *Ages of the World*.