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The Ontology and Phenomenology of Striving in Schelling's "History of Self-Consciousness" (1797–1800)

Marco D. Dozzi

Introduction

One of Schelling's first philosophical projects, and perhaps his most influential one for the history of philosophy, was what he called a "history of self-consciousness" —alternately (seemingly equivalently), a "history of the human spirit."[1] Schelling's most direct influence for such a notion was Fichte's so-called "*pragmatic* history of the human spirit,"[2] and its most direct (and lasting) legacy was the history of Spirit presented by Hegel, particularly in the latter's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Though Schelling's conception of such a history resembles Fichte's own in many ways, the respects in which it differs from it are as subtle as they are important (much as was the case with respect to various other aspects of their respective philosophies of the time). Perhaps the most significant of these differences is that, whereas in Fichte the

[1] Cf. e.g., SW I: 382 / AA I/4: 109 (F.W.J. Schelling, "Treatise Explicatory of the Idealism in the Science of Knowledge (1797)," *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory: Three Essays by F.W.J. Schelling*, trans. Thomas Pfau (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 90) and SW 3: 331 / AA I/9: 25 **(**F.W.J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, trans. Peter Heath (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978), 2).

[2] Cf. GA, I/2: 147 (J.G. Fichte, *Early Philosophical Writings*, trans. Dan Breazeale (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), 131) and GA, I/2: 365 (J.G. Fichte, *Foundation of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre and Related Writings (1794–95)*, trans. Dan Breazeale (Oxford University Press, 2021), 302.

"metaphysical" status of the history of the human spirit is highly *ambiguous*, in Schelling's case the history having such a status appears virtually *incontrovertible*.[3]

The first goal of the following essay is to elaborate upon this metaphysical aspect, which also requires the postulation of an ontology in Schelling's thought in the time period in question (1797-1800). Given the Fichtean heritage of this aspect of Schelling's thought, Fichte will necessarily be part of this discussion, although the aim here is not so much to provide an exhaustive account of differences between Fichte and Schelling as it is to develop some of the metaphysical and ontological implications of Schelling's history of self-consciousness using Fichte as a basis for comprehension and contrast.

Building upon this metaphysical foundation, the second primary aim of this essay is to develop what are argued to be *phenomenological* implications of Schelling's "history," which reveal something like a proto-"existentialist" strain in his early thought: namely, the role of *striving* in Schelling's account, which is attributable to individual human beings and to nature as a whole (if not to even broader ontological categories). The metaphysical and phenomenological aspects are intertwined, for, as will be shown, the phenomenological insights in question play a role in grounding and developing Schelling's ontology.

This account is not meant to suggest that Schelling *intended* to provide a phenomenology in these works, let alone an "existentialist" one—and not only for the simple fact that such philosophical categories did not yet exist (with respect to the former, at least in its contemporary form). On the contrary, Schelling saw himself as a proponent of so-called "transcendental" philosophy in a rather orthodox sense, i.e., one he took to be compatible with and an extension of those of Kant's and Fichte's, and in many ways he was justified in this view.[4] Nonetheless, it can be argued that these metaphysical and phenomenological aspects nonetheless *follow* from Schelling's argumentation.

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[3] Although the point cannot be developed here, the categories "transcendental philosophy" and "metaphysics" need not (and arguably should not) be treated as mutually exclusive as is often thought; thus, metaphysical elements in either Fichte's or Schelling's philosophy do not automatically disqualify them from being "transcendental."

[4] This is a very unpopular view in Schelling scholarship. Examples of the dominant view are too numerous to list here; instead, the reader is simply referred to one excellent *critique* (or at least *problematization*) of it: namely, Sebastian Gardner, "Schelling's Substantive Reinterpretation of the Transcendental Turn: Beyond Method," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 27, no. 2 (2019): 271–92.

The Metaphysics and Ontology of the History of Self-Consciousness

Schelling's Divergence(s) from Fichte: "History" as Hierarchy

One difference between Fichte's and Schelling's notions of a history of Spirit or of self-consciousness can be detected already from the terms introduced above: namely, unlike Schelling, Fichte calls his history "pragmatic." Though there is some debate about what Fichte means by "pragmatic" in this context,[5] it has at least partly to do with Fichte's conception of transcendental philosophy and its corresponding method, manifested in (or as) his *Wissenschaftslehre*. More specifically, it has something to do with Fichte's insistence that the "history" he recounts there is not *temporal* and is sometimes even said to be *fictional*.

To understand these qualifications, one must have at least a basic grasp of the meaning and goal of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Like all transcendental philosophy, the latter is supposed to describe the "conditions for the possibility of experience," but unlike Kant's version of the same, Fichte considers many (if not all) of those to be *mental actions* – forms of "positing."[6] In this sense, one could say that it is a *dynamic* rather than *static* account of transcendental conditions; thus Fichte also calls it "genetic" (that is, it is an account of the *origin* of consciousness, although in a "transcendental" rather than "empirical" sense). Fichte further says that the conditions/acts that the *Wissenschaftslehre* recounts are not "temporal" insofar as they are not *sequential*: instead, they are all *mutually co-dependent and/or implicative*, and there is no priority of one condition/act over another (at least temporally, although perhaps also logically).[7]

Fichte likewise maintains that this history relates to temporality and succession only insofar as our philosophical *reconstruction* of it takes place

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[5] On this problem (and Fichte's notion of a "pragmatic history of the human spirit" in general), cf. esp. Daniel Breazeale, "A Pragmatic History of the Human Mind," in *Thinking Through the Wissenschaftslehre: Themes from Fichte's Early Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 70–95 and Luis Fellipe Garcia, "A Missing Link between Kant and Fichte: Ernst Platner's Role in the Genesis of Fichte's Genetic Method," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 63, no. 3 (2025): 429–52.

[6] Although, there is a precedent for this in Kant's notion of mental *syntheses*, particularly those that are called "transcendental."

[7] Perhaps the clearest and most succinct expression Fichte gives of this method is found in the "First Introduction" to the *Wissenschaftslehre* (cf. GA I/4: 203). J.G. Fichte, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings, 1797–1800*, trans. Dan Breazeale (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 31.

sequentially and in time.[8] In other words, it is only because of our "finite" and "discursive" understanding that the history *appears* to us this way—one might even say, perhaps, that it is due to this "weakness" that it appears *as* a history in the first place. In fact, not only does Fichte maintain that the reality the history of self-consciousness describes is not "actually" sequential or even temporal, he even asserts that there is no real *multiplicity* or *diversity* within it at all:

> To begin with, idealism only postulates a series of original actions. It does not affirm that such a series actually exists. To do so would be in violation of the system, which asserts merely that the first action cannot exist without a second one, etc. The actions in question thus do not occur separately; for the one action is not supposed to exist without the other. In a single stroke, I exist and the world exists for me. Within the system, however, what is really only one action has to be treated as a series of actions, for this is the only way in which we are able to think about it at all; for we are able to grasp only parts, and indeed, only quite specific parts (GA IV/3: 340).[9]

If all of this is the case, however, then Fichte's description of the *Wissenschaftslehre* as a "history" is peculiar, if not misleading. For the term names a philosophical system *as such* after something that is openly said to *distort* what the system is about—that is, insofar as "history" here indicates a conceptual and temporal fragmentation of the "single stroke" spoken of above. Likewise, the notion of action(s) is an intrinsically metaphysical, if not physical notion. How can such a "history" *aid* our understanding if it presupposes and/or is comprised of opaque fictions?[10]

In his reception of Fichte's ideas, the young Schelling does not wholly evade such difficulties. Though much less frequently and with less emphasis, Schelling also sometimes suggests that his notion of such a history is non-temporal and involves conceptual fragmentation. He repeats Fichte's claim that what is "real" in this history is a unity—namely, of an "act of self-consciousness" (similar to what Fichte calls a/the "*Tathandlung*") —and that

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[8] For Dan Breazeale, this is the only sense in which the acts "occur" *at all*: "Such acts thus possess 'reality' only within the extraordinary context of philosophical reflection and only for the philosophical observer" ("Pragmatic History," 88). I present difficulties of this view (even if it is *exegetically* correct) in Marco Dozzi, "The Problem of the Unconscious in Fichte's Later Jena Wissenschaftslehre," *Fichte-Studien* Vol. 48: 434–55.

[9] J.G. Fichte, *Foundations of Transcendental Philosophy (Wissenschaftslehre) Nova Methodo (1796/99)*, trans. Dan Breazeale (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), 102–103.

[10] I discuss this issue as well in Dozzi 2020; similarly, I treat the problem of what is "real" in Fichte in more detail in "What is 'Real' in Fichte? Being, Activity, and (In-)Determinacy in the Jena Period," *Fichte-Studien* 51 (2022), no. 2: 247–65.

the multiplicity it describes is simply a recourse of our finite, discursive understanding.[11]

Yet Schelling never calls this history "pragmatic," nor does he say that its contents are "fictional." In fact, there are strong indications that Schelling thinks that the multiplicity and temporality that are ingredient in a/the philosophical reconstruction of the history of self-consciousness are *not* wholly a product of the weakness of human understanding (after all, Schelling—whose example Hegel will later follow in this regard—generally repudiates such philosophical "excuses"[12]) and instead correspond to or "imitate" a multiplicity of some kind in reality *as such*. In contrast to Fichte's work (and in this respect again, similar to what Hegel will do), one gets a clear sense in Schelling's "history" that there is a *linear progression* from less to more sophisticated forms of cognition, whereby each "stage"—or "epoch," as Schelling says—represents a new *development* that depends on previous changes and thus *asymmetrically* presupposes them. Even if this development is not (or is not *wholly*) *temporal*, such linearity entails that there is a "real" plurality of some kind in the conditions of self-consciousness; furthermore, it is *hierarchical* and in this sense linear, unlike the "circularity" that Fichte emphasizes in his account of transcendental conditions (that is, when Fichte acknowledges a multiplicity in the history of the human spirit at all).

In fact, Schelling even has a way of reconciling this notion of a *real* plurality of conditions with the motif that such plurality arises from "fragmentation"—that is, he proposes a way to describe this fragmentation as *real* and not merely something that occurs in and through philosophical reasoning. This is conveyed in Schelling's descriptions of the aforementioned progression as an *evolution* or *development* of what is "contained" in a/the primordial or original act of self-consciousness, similar to the Neo-Platonic

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[11] Cf. e.g., in the *Wissenschaftslehre Treatise* (1797–98), "It is an inevitable plight of philosophy that it must break down into individual moments and acts what, in the human spirit itself, is but one act and one moment . . . . . It is apparent, then, that this succession of acts—all of which taken together condition consciousness—is not a *sequence*, that is, that one does not presuppose and produce the other, but that all of them together do so in reciprocity" (Schelling, *WLT*, 97–98), and in the *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), "The self-consciousness we start from is an absolute act (…) in order to discover the full content of this act we are obliged to take it apart and split it up, as it were, into a number of individual acts" (SW 3: 388–89 / AA I/9: 79–80). Schelling, *STI*, 42).

[12] Cf. e.g., these lines from the second "letter" in Schelling's *Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* (1795): "My friend, the fight against dogmatism is waged with weak weapons if criticism rests its whole system merely upon, the state of our *cognitive faculty,* and not upon our genuine essence . . . . *Shortcoming, weakness*—are these not accidental limitations admitting of infinite expansion? . . . . criticism means to do more than merely deduce the weakness of reason" (SW 1: 291–92 / AA I/3: 56–58). Schelling, "Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism," in *The Unconditional in Human Knowledge Four Early Essays (1794–1796)*, trans. Fritz Marti (Lewisburg, Pennsylvania: Bucknell University Press, 1980), 161–62.

motif of *reality itself* being a progressive "decompression" of what is "contained" in the One in a unitary manner (although in the latter case this is seen more as a *degradation* than a "development").[13] Such a "cosmological" perspective on the history of self-consciousness is also reinforced by the indications Schelling gives that this history is also intertwined with *nature*, which we turn to now.

Temporality and Teleology

It is not surprising that Schelling's divergence(s) from Fichte with regard to the notion of a history of self-consciousness are also seen in that history's connection to nature, since this is famously the topic that most divided Fichte and Schelling when they had a falling out in 1800–1802.[14] To be sure, Schelling discusses the notion of a history of self-consciousness primarily in the works that he eventually classifies as "transcendental" philosophy (primarily the 1797–1798 *Wissenschaftslehre Treatise* [henceforth "*WLT*"] and the 1800 *System of Transcendental Idealism* [henceforth "*STI*"]); this "Fichtean" tendency on his part is consistent with the close relation between the notion of self-consciousness and the themes of transcendental philosophy (especially "the I"). Accordingly, it is a challenge to grasp the relation between nature and the history of self-consciousness in Schelling's philosophy—just as it is a challenge to grasp the relation between nature-philosophy and "transcendental" philosophy in general.[15] It is nonetheless clear that there *is* some relation between the two notions for Schelling, and the following should shed light on this.

The strongest expression of the relation between nature and the history of self-consciousness is Schelling's claim that *nature itself strives toward* self-consciousness. Here "nature" evidently refers primarily to what is not *human*, as humanity and/or self-consciousness is said to be the "end" of the history of self-consciousness (whereby "end" is to be understood teleologically, but perhaps also temporally). As Schelling writes in the Introduction to the *STI*,

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[13] Strictly speaking, what is said to "develop" or "evolve" in such moments are what Schelling calls "the absolute synthesis" – yet the latter term is itself treated as equivalent to a primordial "act of self-consciousness" (*Tathandlung*?), for it is a "synthesis" *of* the aforementioned multiplicity. Cf. e.g., SW 3: 484–85, 598 / AA I/9: 181–82, 296–97. Schelling, *STI*, 117, 207.

[14] Cf. esp. Michael Vater, Michael and David Wood (editors and translators). *The Philosophical Rupture Between Fichte and Schelling: Selected Texts and Correspondence (1800–1802)*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2012.

[15] A penetrating and thorough analysis of this problem is given by Philipp Schwab in "The Fichte Schelling Debate, or: Six Models for Relating Subjectivity and Nature," in *Nature and Naturalism in Classical German Philosophy*, eds. Luca Corti and Johannes Schülein (New York: Routledge, 2022), 122–47.

> The dead and unconscious products of nature are merely unsuccessful [*mißlungene*] attempts that it makes to reflect itself. So-called "dead" nature in general is an immature intelligence; consequently, one can already detect an intelligent character in the phenomena of nature which remain unconscious [*noch bewußtlos*].—Nature's highest goal—to become wholly [an] object to itself—is achieved only through its last and highest reflection, which is none other than the human being; or more generally, it is what we call Reason, by means of which nature completely returns into itself [*zurückkehrt*] and through which it is revealed that nature is originally identical with what we recognize in ourselves as that which is intelligent and conscious (SW 3: 341 / AA I/9: 31).[16]

One may be tempted to assume that Schelling is here referring to a *temporal* development from non-organic matter to self-consciousness, given that such a notion has now become commonplace in biological/evolutionary science. While such a view is arguably *compatible* with Schelling's view, Schelling does not explicitly defend it. Yet even if there is *not* a temporal element of the "history" of self-consciousness in *this* respect (we will see that there is *another* respect in which it seems that it must have at least a temporal *element*), what the above citation shows is that Schelling recognizes a *hierarchy* of some kind in—and perhaps beyond—nature. Corresponding to what was said previously about "stages" or "epochs" in the history of self-consciousness, it is evident that some beings and forms of reality in this hierarchy are more "primitive" than others, i.e., according to the degree to which they are near (or have) self-consciousness. Hence, to the extent that this "history" pertains to conditions of self-consciousness, Schelling cannot in good faith adhere to Fichte's suggestions that *all* conditions of experience are mutually implicative or codependent—i.e., wholly "circular"—for the "hierarchical" aspect of his ontology entails that there is some form of a *linear progression* in the history of self-consciousness, even if it is "only" logical/metaphysical and not (also) temporal.

The fact that Schelling describes self-consciousness as a *result* also makes it tempting to understand the "history of self-consciousness" as being temporal in nature, or at least as having a temporal element. For the notion of a result is connoted with a time or a moment in which the result *was not yet obtained*. To be sure, Schelling could be using the notion in an atypical way (as he takes himself to be doing with the notion of a "history"), whereby self-consciousness is only a "result" in the sense that it is "grounded" in something

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[16] Schelling, *STI*, 6 (translation significantly modified).

more fundamental. However, such a caveat is more difficult to make when one considers that Schelling describes self-consciousness as a *goal that has been achieved*: this suggests that a change has occurred insofar as what did not *originally* possess self-consciousness *now* possesses it. In this limited respect, at least, it seems that we have to accept at least a temporal *element* in Schelling's account.

Yet what (or who) did not have self-consciousness, and in what sense does "our" possession of it amount to an achievement? Given Schelling's claim that "human beings" are the result of *nature's* striving, we would seem to have an answer. Yet we, too, are part of nature in a broader sense of the term—in what sense have *we* "achieved" this, and the rest of nature has not?

The Unity between the Striving of Nature and of Humankind

To answer these questions, it would be helpful to consider what Schelling conveys as the "mechanism" of the history of self-consciousness. The benefit of so doing is especially apparent when we consider that this "mechanism" appears in both Schelling's nature-philosophy and his "transcendental" philosophy; attention to it should give us better insight into how nature and the history of self-consciousness are related, if only indirectly.

Just as he will do in the rest of his career, the young Schelling thinks of reality as being divided up into "potencies." In this period, at least, potencies can be understood as thresholds of *complexity* or moments of *qualitative progression* in the hierarchy of being/consciousness referred to previously; the "highest" of these potencies (at least in what we think of as the "world" or in nature) is human self-consciousness.[17] What dictates the *transition* from one potency to the next is a complex interaction between what Schelling calls *forces* or *strivings*.

Some of the most pertinent details of this dynamic will be given later, but for now it is sufficient to recognize Schelling's view that "higher" potencies are a *product* of the same dynamic of forces or strivings that is also present in "lower" potencies. The "or" in the phrase "forces or strivings" here is important, for it is itself representative (or symptomatic) of the relation (or tension) between nature-philosophy and transcendental philosophy: broadly speaking, one could say that the language of "forces" corresponds to the former and "striving" to the latter. It is tempting to understand "striving" as an *agential potentiation* of what is not intrinsically agential, but this would presuppose a view—contestable for Schelling—in which nature is not "originally" agential. Schelling's more consistent view is that this duplicity—

[17] Cf. e.g., Schelling's claim in Part One of the *STI* that "in its highest potentiality [nature] is again nothing else but self-consciousness" (SW 3: 356 / AA I/9: 46). Schelling, *STI*, 17.

and this applies to the demarcation between nature-philosophy and transcendental philosophy in general—reflects a mere difference in *perspective* on the object of philosophical study.

Thus, for our purposes, it will be provisionally accepted that when Schelling says "the same potencies of intuition which reside in the I can also be exhibited up to a certain limit in nature" (SW 3: 332 / AA I/9: 25),[18] he means "same" in a strong sense: that is, the forces in the I *are* the forces in nature, only considered from another perspective; when speaking of "the I" (or "human beings"), these forces are described/conceived as *strivings*. Again, this does not mean that these strivings are "actually" non-agential forces, only that we can understand nature *without using* the notion of "striving," even if the "forces" described therein *are* fundamentally "strivings."

What this entails for "us"—i.e., human beings—is that the primordial forces, and indeed the *agency* that is present in nature, are also "ours"; we *share* in this agency in some way. Naturally, to the extent that we are not *aware* of this agency, it must be *unconscious* to us. Accordingly, just as in other respects, *the depths of "our" unconscious extend to the whole of nature*. What this entails in the context of the notion of a history of self-consciousness is that non-(wholly?)-self-conscious potencies are "within" us in some respect, just as in evolutionary science one speaks of certain mechanisms and structures in human beings being more "primitive" or "ancient" than others. As a result, the hierarchy of being/consciousness is not simply an "external" one that obtains between beings, but an "internal" one within each being itself—a kind of microcosm of the whole. This also suggests that the *goal* of self-consciousness was (or "is") *ours*, and that our very existence is a testament to the *achievement* of this goal.

We should not, however, think of this history and this result only as something *below* our awareness. For not only do we not experience the *goal* of self-consciousness as having been "ours," we do not experience self-consciousness itself *as* an "accomplishment" or the result of striving; for "us," self-consciousness is simply a "given," a fact of our existence (although, to be sure, it is far from an ordinary fact). Accordingly, it would appear that whatever has this goal and achieves satisfaction in reaching it is something that *transcends* our awareness— not simply (or only) something that lies "beneath" it. Insofar as "nature" is said to revert into itself in the form of humankind (according to the citation given earlier), one could rightly suspect that nature is—or is *also*—the referent of this "higher" agency. Yet the name for this agency could just as well be *Spirit* (*Geist*), which—particularly in the *WLT*—is also said to be the "culmination" of the history of self-consciousness and is often treated as

[18] Schelling, *STI*, 3 (translation modified).

interchangeable with nature (just as is the case with "the I," at least qua "absolute" or "pure" I).[19]

Whether this "higher" agency be called nature, Spirit, or something else, it is evident that we are unable to fully grasp—or better, *experience*—the sense in which it achieves its goal in and through us. To be sure, one can have the insight *that* this goal is achieved in philosophical reflection (as Schelling considers himself to have done, just as Hegel will after him; such realization is associated with notions like "intellectual intuition" and "absolute knowledge"), but this does not amount to a felt *coincidence* of the agency that strives for self-consciousness and the agency that has achieved it. As such, the motif that was first proposed by Fichte, reiterated by Schelling, and then made more famous by Hegel that a philosophical "performance"—or "recollection," as Schelling will also call it—of the history of self-consciousness consists in the "original" or "observed" I (equivalent perhaps to "nature" or "Spirit") "coinciding" with the "philosophical" or "observing" I (equivalent to the individual person, the philosopher) at the end of a philosophical "re-enactment" or "recollection"[20] is only true in a weak sense, for the philosopher presumably does not *feel* this coincidence of the "observed" and "observing" agent, even if they can conceptually "entertain" it.

In the following section, we will see that there are other ways indicated by Schelling in which the dynamic(s) of forces/strivings continues to live on in human self-consciousness, and that, in a certain respect/context, the aforementioned "failure" can be experienced *as* a failure. This will show that, at least in a certain respect, Schelling conceives of the "history of self-consciousness" not as a *purely* transcendental account of the conditions of experience (which risks being entirely "fictional," as in Fichte's account) but as a reflection on the nature of experience as such—a *phenomenological* ontology.

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[19] Thus Schelling writes early in the *WTL*, for example, that "All *acts of Spirit* . . . aim at presenting the infinite in the finite. *The goal of all these acts is self-consciousness*, and their history is none other than the history of self-consciousness" (SW 1: 382 / AA I/4: p. 109). Schelling, *WTL*, 90 (emphases added)

[20] Schelling's version of this is given, for example, at the beginning of Part Three in the *STI*: ". . . our enquiry will therefore have to go on until what is posited for us in the I qua object is also posited for us in the I qua subject, that is, until for us the consciousness of our object coincides [*zusammentrifft*] with our own consciousness, and thus until the I itself has for us arrived at the point from which we started" (SW 3: 389 / AA I/9: 89). Schelling, *STI*, 42 (translation modified).

The Phenomenology of Striving in the History of Self-Consciousness

Self-Objectification as "Infinite Becoming"

Although Schelling sometimes indicates that the history of self-consciousness has "ended" insofar as self-consciousness is in fact *present* in the world (at least to the extent that human beings exist), other aspects of his account of this "history"—if not his philosophical principles in general—suggest not only that an "end" to such a history is impossible, but that the very *idea* of such an accomplishment is misguided. This is evident from Schelling's evident recognition of the peculiar nature of self-consciousness as such, a peculiarity that can be hypothesized to be rooted in phenomenological rather than "strictly" transcendental considerations, although it appears in the guise of the latter.

The *STI* begins with the familiar Fichtean—or even more originally, Reinholdian—demand for a "highest principle of knowledge," and arguably the most important or prominent of the criteria for such a principle is that it be a kind of *unity* and even *identity*. Yet this "transcendental" demand evidently requires (or at least is aided by) a kind of experiential *confirmation*—and sure enough, Schelling says that we "find" that self-consciousness itself satisfies this demand. But in what sense? What we find in Schelling's explanation of an (obviously *reflective*) act of self-consciousness shows that this is found to be true in a surprisingly complex sense, and self-consciousness is far from a "simple" unity or identity. He writes:

> The fact that, in self-consciousness, the subject and the object of thinking are one, can only become clear to anyone through the act of self-consciousness itself. What is involved here is that *one should simultaneously undertake this act, and in so doing should again reflect upon oneself*.—. . . . In what follows, it will be constantly presupposed that [the reader has] the ability [1] to intuit himself in this act, [2] to distinguish himself as what is [being] thought from himself as what is thinking, and [3] in this differentiation, to again recognize himself as identical (SW 3: 365 / AA I/9: 55–56).[21]

Readers may recognize the "dialectic" that Schelling describes here by virtue of acquaintance with Hegel, who borrows from Schelling in this regard

[21] Schelling, *STI*, 24; the lines following the ellipsis are my own translation and diverge substantially from Heath's.

(although a version of it was originally formulated by Hölderlin).[22] This dialectic explains Schelling's designation of self-consciousness as an "original duplicity in identity" (SW 3: 373 / AA I/9: 63**,** my translation). Yet how can a duplicity *also* be an identity?

Here one may venture a phenomenological explanation of this cryptic passage. In reflecting upon myself *as* a subject of consciousness, a "duality" in my representation necessarily arises: I appear *to* myself, but precisely by virtue of the fact that something *appears* to me—even if that which appears to me is *myself*—a subtle kind of differentiation between "me" (qua "object") and "me" (qua "subject") is made. In other words, I recognize the appearance as *myself*, but simply by virtue of it being an *appearance*—insofar as it is the "object" of my awareness—it is not "me" insofar as I am "purely" or "absolutely" a subject. The latter is what I feel as "*me*," at least in the sense of the "me" that is felt to transcend whatever appears to me as an object of consciousness. This "pure" or "absolute" subject, as Schelling calls it, does not and cannot appear *as such*, for only "objects" appear to consciousness—even if the object that appears is "oneself."

Some form of this logic arguably underlies Schelling's otherwise concomitant description of the I as "an *infinite becoming*" (SW 3: 383 / AA I/9: 74).[23] In a sense, I can "become" but never wholly *be* an object to myself, for if I were *completely* objectified in self-reflection, that which I would recognize would not have anything left of "me"; my complete transformation into an object would amount to me no longer having anything left of being a subject. Conversely (or reciprocally), if the subject did not at least *partially* become an object to itself, it would not—at least on Schelling's model of self-consciousness—be self-conscious in the first place.[24]

Thus, one can speak of self-consciousness as a kind of *tendency*, a movement *toward* self-objectification rather than a complete accomplishment of it. What we experience as "self-consciousness" in an act of reflection would accordingly be this "tendency," this "partial" fulfillment. This tendency or "becoming" is aptly described as *infinite* precisely insofar as it can never be

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[22] In *Judgment and Being*, Hölderlin asks: "How can I say 'I!' without self-consciousness? But how is self-consciousness possible? By opposing myself to myself, separating myself from myself, but, despite this separation, recognizing myself as what is the same in that which is opposed [to me] [*im entgegengesetzten als dasselbe erkenne*]." Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 4, *Der Tod des Empedokles. Aufsätze*, ed. Friedrich Beißner (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1962), 227, my translation.

[23] Schelling, *STI*, 38.

[24] The terms in which this is formulated are partly inspired by similar claims made by Jean-Paul Sartre; cf. e.g., his "Conscience de soi et connaissance de soi," *Bulletin de la société française de philosophie* 42, no. 3 (April–June 1948): 49–91 (cf. esp. 66–70). "Self-Consciousness and Self-Knowledge," trans. Marco D. Dozzi. *Sartre Studies International* 29, no. 1 (2023), 22–89 (cf. esp. 43–47).

wholly fulfilled—in fact, even the *idea* of such a "coincidence" is contradictory, as the very *possibility* of this act depends upon the *impossibility* of complete self-objectification; the very *notion* of complete self-objectification is contradictory.

As will be elaborated upon in what follows, we nonetheless strive for such coincidence in spite of this impossibility (that we either do not recognize or do not admit); thus, we strive—or at least some "part" of us strives—for what is ultimately a *contradiction*. And insofar as self-consciousness depends upon, if not is "the positing of a difference where there is none" (as Hegel will later say), it is itself a form of self-*opposition*, if not self-*contradiction*.

Self-Objectification as Infinite, Vicious Cycle

Schelling also provides a more strictly "metaphysical" reason that such self-coincidence is impossible and that self-consciousness should thus be described as "infinite becoming." Namely, he indicates that the very attempt to coincide with oneself in this way has the *opposite* of its intended effect; that is, rather than allowing for self-coincidence (at least entirely or in every sense), self-objectification causes the subject to be *further* removed from itself. As he says in the *STI* in the section "Derivation of Productive Intuition," ". . . the I cannot intuit [an infinite] activity as its own activity without distinguishing itself as the subject or substrate of this infinite activity. Yet precisely in this intuiting, a new duplicity arises; a contradiction between finitude and infinitude" (SW 3: 331–32 / AA I/9: 127).[25] This dynamic underlies Schelling's enigmatic claim at the beginning of the "Deduction of the Organic" section in the text that "[the intelligence] seeks itself, but precisely in so doing it flees from itself" (SW 3: 489 / AA I/9: 186).[26]

This dynamic of striving, failure, and further striving is *infinite*, for it is a *vicious cycle*: the attempt for self-unification generates further division, which generates more desire for self-coincidence, and so on and so forth.[27] Of course, such a description shows that this dialectic is not entirely *conscious*; it expresses an unconscious (or perhaps "pre-conscious") striving. In the life of a single conscious individual, this less-than-conscious striving expresses itself in *ordinary* consciousness—as opposed to self-*reflection*—as the *progression of time*, which is itself conveyed by Schelling as a kind of "dissatisfaction" with the present. Thus, in the *WLT*, for example, Schelling explains that the (evidently human) soul cannot *fully intuit* itself in a single moment—it cannot make its

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[25] Schelling, *STI*, 76.

[26] Schelling, *STI*, 120–21.

[27] To be sure, at a "broader" ontological level, there is also a form of linear progress that is enabled by this dialectic: i.e., self-consciousness as such. Yet as will be discussed below, this may not amount to a complete overcoming of or justification for such "failure."

infinite nature as absolute subject *finite* as an object—so it "pushes forward," continually regenerating itself through this effort to accomplish what is impossible:

> It is as though the soul were striving at each single moment to present something infinite; because it is not capable of this, it necessarily strives beyond each presence [*Gegenwart*] to present the infinite at least *successively*, in *time*.[28] The soul, then, continually produces the representation of a universe, even though it is not capable of presenting the latter at any single moment. It would not do this if it did not have a continuous feeling of its being limited [*Beschränktseyns*] and, in connection with that [feeling], if it did not express a necessary striving against it . . . . . all this reveals an original activity of the soul that strives for nothing so much as for *preserving itself*; from this it follows that the soul contains its continuity and the certainty of its existence *within itself*, [and] hence, that it is an irrepressible and infinitely regenerative activity (SW I: 384 / AA I/5: 111–12).[29]

This generation of temporality is only a conscious manifestation of a striving that extends to all of nature. As will become clearer below, what arises from nature's "striving beyond the present" and its inability to present the infinite in a single moment—or in this context, a single *form*—is the multiplicity of *natural forms as such*: not specifically (or at least not only) individual beings or groups thereof, but the logical-organizational structures, "monuments," or *potencies*, which constitute the classes that make up the hierarchy of being. Taken *individually*, these are a "failure" ("failed efforts," as Schelling says in the *STI*) from the perspective of the history of self-consciousness insofar as they do not completely achieve self-consciousness; however, at a broader level, they are an occasion for *linear* progress, i.e., the achievement of self-consciousness in and through human beings. A fuller explanation of how this happens is given by Schelling in his account of opposed forces or "strivings"—that is, the "mechanism" of the history of self-consciousness.

The Conflict of Forces/Strivings in Nature and in the I

[28] Schelling repeats this motif late in the *STI*, where he credits an inspiration from Leibniz in this regard (SW 3: 487 / AA I/9: 185). Schelling, *STI*, 120. Note that this corresponds to the Neo-Platonic motif of a "decompression" of what is contained in unity mentioned at the outset of the essay, which is even more palpable in the *STI* since what is said to be so "developed" is an "absolute synthesis," itself the "original" act of self-consciousness.
[29] Schelling, *WLT*, 90.

Like Fichte, Schelling tends to convey an act of self-reflection as a *movement inward* or, to use Fichte's language (which Schelling adopts), a *reversion* to or upon oneself (a "*Zurückgehen*" or "*Zurückkehren*"). Nor is the description of self-reflection—and indeed self-*consciousness*—as "reversion" wholly abstract or metaphorical, at least in some moments and contexts in the work of both Fichte and Schelling. In sections 4 and 5 of Fichte's *Foundation of the Wissenschaftslehre* (henceforth "*FWL*"), Fichte famously (or infamously) posits that self-consciousness arises from a "force" or "striving" in the I that "originally" moves "outward"—he calls it "centrifugal"—and "subsequently" collides with something that at least *seems* external to it (Fichte calls it an "*Anstoß*"), causing that activity to *revert* into the I, resulting in *self-consciousness*, which is thus "centripetal" in nature.[30]

Schelling uses a similar motif (with some notable modifications) both with respect to the I and to *nature* in his texts from 1797–1800—and while his usage clearly exhibits an influence from Fichte, it has gone nearly (or completely) unnoticed that Schelling had already (albeit very briefly) employed a similar account in his 1795 *Letters on Dogmatism*, evidently written *before* Schelling had read §4–5 of Fichte's *FWL*:

> An activity without any *object*, an activity to which there is no resistance, never returns into itself. Only through a return to one's self does *consciousness* arise. Only a *restricted* reality is an *actuality* for us. [-] Where all resistance ceases, there is infinite expansion. But the intensity of our consciousness is in inverse ratio to the extension of our being (SW I: 324–25 / AA I/3: 94).[31]

Moreover, although the only inspiration that Fichte cites for his doctrine in the *FWL* is an unspecific "*Naturlehre*" (GA I/2: 406),[32] it is clear in Schelling's case that—unlike for Fichte—the relevance of this doctrine to "*Naturlehre*" is no mere heuristic device, for a form of this dynamic exists in both the I *and* nature; its existence in the former is a "potentiation" of the latter.

Schelling continues to adhere loosely to this "refractive" model of self-consciousness in 1797 to 1800, albeit with some important modifications. One aspect that remains consistent is the idea that self-consciousness is in some sense a *reaction* to its "outward activity" being limited, i.e., the notion that self-awareness arises as a reaction to limitation. Thus he writes in the *WLT*, for

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[30] Fichte continues to speak of self-consciousness as a kind of self-reversion in later editions of the *Wissenschaftslehre*; most commentators—without any strong justification—take this shared language not to indicate continuity with his conception in the *FWL*.

[31] Schelling, "Letters," 185.

[32] Dan Breazeale reasonably translates this phrase as "the natural sciences": cf. J. G. Fichte, *Foundation*, 337.

example: "Only a force returning into itself creates an *interiority* [*ein* Inneres] *for* itself" (SW I: 379 / AA I/4: 106).[33] It is true that, in Schelling's case, this limiting factor or element—which, in Fichte's case, is called a "check" (*Anstoß*)—is something that is *internal* to the I, if not to nature on a wider scale.[34] Nonetheless, for Schelling as well as for Fichte, the I *experiences* this limit as something "foreign" to it—it is not *aware* that it posits the limit itself. It must perceive this limit as "other," for otherwise it would not be a limit for it in the first place, and its activity would not "revert" back into itself—a reversion that, in this "experiential" respect, appears simply to *be* self-consciousness.[35]

If we think of self-consciousness as equivalent to a reverting, "inward" force that, in turn, is a reaction to limitation of a continuous "outward" activity, we gain insight into why it is a *desire* or a *striving*. In Fichte's parallel account, self-consciousness almost appears like an accidental "byproduct" of this dynamic: the activity of the I is *interrupted*, and this "surprises" the I, as it were, into becoming aware of itself. For Schelling, on the other hand, the limitation of outward activity provokes not only awareness but a kind of *willed countermeasure*; here the inward activity is not *just* a refracted force, but a desire to *flee* from the limit or object and "return" into itself.[36]

Of course, the reversion of the I into itself does not wholly *succeed*; at the level of conscious experience, we experience this as the progression of time—in self-*reflection*, as the inability to experience complete self-coincidence through self-objectification. It is not *only* that the very attempt to "see" myself entails self-objectification that makes self-coincidence impossible: for Schelling, that *(phenomeno-)logical* impossibility is correlated with a *metaphysical* impossibility. The "metaphysical" reason that the I does not coincide with itself in its reversion is that the outer force or activity *in turn resists this reversion*; that is, because the latter has infinite efficacy, it continually opposes the attempts of the inward force/striving to flee from it. And it is precisely the

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[33] Schelling, *WLT*, 88.

[34] Whether or to what extent this is also the case for Fichte is a disputed question—one that is important because of its implications for what is entailed by Fichte's "idealism." An excellent analysis of this problem is given by Dan Breazeale in his essay "Anstoß, Abstract Realism, and the Finitude of the I," in his *Thinking through the Wissenschaftslehre: Themes from Fichte's Early Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 156–96.

[35] Thus Schelling writes in the *STI*, for example, "To come to consciousness, and to be limited, are one and the same. Only that which is limited for me [*an mir begrenzt ist*], so to speak, comes to consciousness: the limiting activity falls outside all consciousness, just because it is the cause of all limitation. The fact of limitation must appear as independent of me, since I can discern only my own limitedness, never the activity whereby it is posited" (SW 3: 90). Schelling, *STI*, 43–44, translation modified.

[36] Thus, shortly after the above citation from the *Letters*, Schelling says that "The I, on finding resistance, is obliged to take a stand against it [*sich ihm entgegenzusetzen*], *that is, to return into self* [*in sich selbst zurück zu kehren*]" (SW 1: 324 / AA I/3: 94). Schelling, *Letters*, 185.

"meeting point" of these two opposed forces pulling in opposite directions that manifests as concrete "products" for Schelling: at the level of nature, these are natural forms, whereas at the level of the individual I, it is the continued progression of time.

We thereby obtain a fuller, or at least *alternate* explanation of why the attempt at self-objectification results not only in failure, but in the opposite of its intended goal: the I, or even Spirit/nature as a whole, does not *only* strive to intuit itself ("make itself finite"), for that striving is counteracted by an *opposing* force or striving. It can be difficult to get a sense of this in Schelling's texts sometimes, for he tends to speak of nature/Spirit/the I as having a *singular* striving, which is generally to be self-conscious. Yet that striving appears to correspond more directly with the centripetal force/striving, which is justifiable insofar as this is the striving that we *experience* (or at least *can* experience) as such. Notice in the following passage from the *WLT*, for example, that Schelling speaks of Spirit as primarily having this goal of "inwardness," but acknowledges that this tendency has an *opposed* activity (force/striving):

> Spirit continually seeks to fill the infinite [*the centrifugal striving – M.D.*], while the opposed activity [*the centripetal striving – M.D.*] enables it to inspect itself in this striving. That is, we will conceive of the soul as an activity that continually strives to extract something finite from the infinite [*here and in what remains, the referent still appears to be the centripetal striving – M.D.*]. It is as though the soul comprised an infinity that it is constrained to present outside itself. This cannot be explained any further, except by referring [again] to the constant striving of Spirit to become *finite* for itself; that is, to become conscious of itself (SW I: 382 / AA I/4: 109).[37]

The centripetal striving is "constrained to present [infinity] outside itself" precisely because it cannot make itself finite (as alluded to earlier in the explanation of the progression of time); fundamentally, it is an absolute *subject* that cannot wholly become an *object*. It is true that this "failure" also generates a form of "success": the achievement of self-consciousness *depends on* the outer force/striving. However, it does not do so in the way we *desire*, which is why the outer force/striving is experienced as "foreign" to us, just as are the "products" that, in a sense at least, alienate us farther from this impossible goal.

To be sure, despite this experience of the centrifugal force as "foreign," it is also "ours" or even *is* "us"—and curiously, this entails that "we"

[37] Schelling, *WLT*, 109.

continually *exacerbate* the impossibility of our own self-coincidence (albeit in an unconscious manner). If we take this "holistic" view of the I or Spirit, the dynamic of opposed strivings gives the impression that it is (or rather, *we* are) *ambivalent*: it seeks itself, but it also seeks *not* to be itself. Such ambivalence appears justified insofar as the attempt to be "wholly" itself (to be wholly self-identical, to "coincide" with oneself) would result in its disappearance; thus, the I/Spirit seems to have no means of achieving complete satisfaction, which is not only metaphysically impossible, but *logically* impossible, as well.[38]

Conclusion: The Harmonizing (and Mysterious) "Third" Agency

Reinforcing the aforementioned "holistic" view of the agent under consideration—whether it be nature, Spirit, or "the I"—Schelling will sometimes speak of a form of agency that is *superior* to and *subordinates* the opposed forces/strivings (like Plato's chariot analogy in the *Phaedrus*), i.e., something that *regulates* and *wills* this conflict precisely so that there may *be* self-consciousness. Because of the importance of the following passage in the *STI* (Part 3, Section 1), it will be cited in full:

> The I of self-consciousness moves in these opposing directions. It consists only in this conflict, or rather, it is itself the conflict of opposing directions. As surely as the I is aware of itself, this conflict must arise and be maintained. The question is *how* it is maintained.
>
> Two opposing directions cancel out and destroy one another; thus, it would seem that their conflict cannot persist. The result would be absolute inactivity, for since the I is nothing but the striving to be self-identical, the sole ground that determines its activity is a persistent contradiction within itself. Yet every contradiction is self-destructive, in and for itself. No contradiction can persist except *through* the striving itself to maintain it or to think it; through this third factor [*dieses Dritte*] itself, a sort of identity comes about, a reciprocal relation of the two opposed elements within it.
>
> The original contradiction in the essence of the I itself cannot be abolished without abolition of the I itself, nor can it endure in and for

[38] Sometimes in the *STI*, Schelling suggests that the I seeks *only* self-coincidence, which is described as a "past" state; for example, in the midst of the "Second Epoch" in Part III, he says that "the I originally is a pure and absolute identity, to which it must constantly seek to return [*zurückzukehren*]" (SW 3: 479 / AA I/9: 177)]. Schelling, *STI*, 113. This would seem to characterize only the "centripetal" of the I; nonetheless, for this to be said of the I "as a whole" is justified in a sense, precisely because the I *experiences* the centrifugal striving as foreign to it and its desires.

> itself. It will persist only through the necessity of doing so, that is, through the striving to maintain this contradiction and thereby to bring identity into it (SW 3: 392 / AA I/9: 83–84).[39]

Here the problem of agency is even greater than before. As we have seen, it is already a challenge to think of "the I of self-consciousness" (as Schelling calls it here) as being *itself* a "conflict of opposing directions," and Schelling makes that identification explicitly here. Yet now Schelling also introduces a "third factor" (*dieses Dritte*), which in some sense coordinates or even "reconciles" this conflict. Like the aforementioned postulated agency that achieves "satisfaction" in bringing about self-consciousness in the history of Spirit, it seems that this "*Dritte*" must transcend our perspective or conscious experience in some sense, at least in ordinary awareness. "We" do not strive for *contradiction* (at least consciously); at most "we" may be said to strive for *self-identity*—which Schelling notably *identifies* with "the I" in the above passage, another instance in which that term appears to refer to the centripetal striving. Yet it is also true that such "striving" could likewise apply to a "higher" awareness that "sees" the conflict of the I (or nature, for that matter) and that strives "to bring identity into it," as Schelling says. What this "third," higher agency "sees" that "we" do not is that such identity *depends* on contradiction—i.e., the "conflict"—which is why it strives to "maintain or to think it."

The precise identity and nature of this "*Dritte*" remains ambiguous, however. When Schelling briefly uses this motif in his nature-philosophy (unsurprisingly, *not* in order to explain the history of self-consciousness), it is only to illustrate that what "reconciles" a conflict of two *forces* must be (a) Spirit.[40] As in the "transcendental" philosophy texts, the ambiguity of this term can be seen as an advantage, since it can refer both to an individual human being or to a transindividual reality—hence the ease of identifying "Spirit" with *nature*. Yet the term that best conveys a transindividual scope as well as an association with Spirit *and* nature is Schelling's short-lived term "world soul" (*Weltseele*).[41]

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[39] Schelling, *STI*, 44 (translation modified). Schelling partly adapts this model from §2 of Fichte's follow-up essay to the *Foundations*, that is, the *Outline of What is Distinctive of the Wissenschaftslehre with Regard to the Theoretical Power* (1795): cf. GA I/3: 147–48. Fichte, *Foundations*, 384–86; however, Fichte uses it to deduce *matter* rather than self-consciousness. Naturally, Schelling uses it in his nature-philosophy, as well, as will be discussed below.

[40] Cf. AA I/5: 102 / SW 2: 50–51. Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, trans. Errol E. Harris, and Peter Heath. Cambridge University Press (1988), 37–38.

[41] Though short-lived, the notion was significant enough for Schelling that he dedicated a treatise to it in 1798 (cf. SW 2: 345ff / AA I/6). Sean McGrath similarly identifies Schelling's notion of a "third" agency (which he calls a "principle") with the world soul: cf. *The Dark Ground of Spirit: Schelling and the Unconscious* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 90.

Although it may be tempting in turn to identify this with *the Absolute* or *God*, Schelling would have a sound reason to avoid making this identification. As argued above, nature is *continuous* with humanity in a profound sense, one that encompasses the aforementioned dynamic of *striving*. Even this "*Dritte*" has a form of striving if it is to be thought of as "seeking" (or at least *having sought*) self-consciousness, a fact that awkwardly suggests a kind of *finitude*, a quality that even Schelling generally dissociates from notions of God or the Absolute.[42] Furthermore, even if this "meta" agency is in some respect "elevated above" the conflict of opposed forces/strivings, its 'solution' still is a "compromise" for it, as it were, for there remains conflict and even contradiction in Spirit *despite* the aforementioned "reconciliation"; this "demiurgical" aspect in its being or notion is difficult to reconcile with an infinite God, but is quite in keeping with the notion of a "world soul," for example.

Whatever the identity of this "meta" agency may be, Schelling's use of this motif reinforces the thesis posited at the outset: the goal of achieving self-consciousness, and whatever "satisfaction" might arise in the achievement of that goal in and through the appearance of *human beings* can—indeed must—transcend "our" perspective *qua* conscious individuals. If we accept this, there nonetheless remain (at least) two questions—or rather, problems—that can only be mentioned here as provocations for further thought. One is whether such a teleology of self-consciousness can be justified in light of the existential cost it has for *individuals* (a problem that has come to be associated primarily with Hegel). The other is whether Schelling can justifiably postulate an Absolute or God that transcends any need for "compromise" and sacrifice in such a history—even if such compromise is to come in the form of Nature, Spirit, or a "world soul" that "mediates" between God and humanity.

[42] Thus, Fichte writes in §5 of the *FWL*: "the very concept of striving already contains finitude, for anything that is not *resisted* is not a striving" (GA I/2: 404). Fichte, *FWL*, 336.

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Kant and Early Schelling on the Contingent Duality of Logic and Nature

Xuasong Liu and Levi Haeck Gormez

Kant and Schelling offer markedly different approaches to the problem of the duality between logic and nature, and the imperative to unify them. According to Kant's "transcendental logic," logic and nature are reciprocally unified in a two-directional sense: (1) the concepts of the faculty of the understanding are needed if the spatiotemporal intuitions from the faculty of sensibility are to correspond to determinable objects in nature, whereas (2) the understanding would lack truth or significance if it did not synthesize those intuitions by means of its *a priori* concepts. In contrast, the early Schelling proposes what we call a "logic of evolution" in which both logic and nature evolve from a common original synthetic unity of subject and object (i.e., original intuition). A shared underlying logic explains the unity of logic and nature. Therefore, while for Kant there is a necessary unity of fundamentally *heterogenous* faculties of the human mind (*Gemüt*)—sensibility and understanding—for Schelling, there is a necessarily emergent duality between two realms—of nature and logic—originating from within one fundamentally *homogenous* evolution. This, of course, is connected to how both philosophers view the nature of logic: for Kant the intellect is fundamentally *discursive*, while for Schelling it is primordially *intuitive*.

We argue, however, that despite these famously different lines of thought regarding the duality and unity of logic and nature, it has all too often been neglected that both Kant and Schelling view human intelligence as

fundamentally contingent and organic. More precisely, for both Kant and Schelling, there is an irreducible contingency in the self-knowledge or self-intuition of human intelligence. We argue that both philosophers maintain that human intelligence self-reflectively comes to the point of viewing itself as a living organization in order to give a systematic account of the contingency of its inner workings (i.e., its necessary forms and concepts). In and through such endeavor, both thinkers contend with a persistent duality between logic and nature. It is precisely around this structural tension that the interplay of contingency and organicism takes place—or so we will show. Moreover, we specifically address two moments when this tension (between logic and nature) and interplay (between contingency and organicism) appear most palpable in both philosophies: in the acquisition of *a priori* representations on the one hand, and in the construction of matter on the other.

Contingency and Organicism in Kant's Transcendental Logic of Nature

In Kant's transcendental philosophy, the mediation between logic and nature is structured by the discursive representational capacities of the faculties of the human "mind," each governed by its distinct *a priori* forms. These include (a) space and time, as *a priori* forms of sensibility; (b) the categories of the understanding as *a priori* forms of pure thinking; and (c) schemata of the imagination that mediate between sensibility and understanding. Alongside the constitutive principles of nature resulting from (a)–(c), Kant also identifies regulative principles, namely ideas of reason such as the soul, the world, and God, which guide the understanding's systematic use (KrV, A645/B673),[1] [2] and the idea of the purposiveness of nature, for the use of the power of judgment in the absence of determinate concepts (KU, AA 05: 179–181). The systematic articulation of these principles is the task of transcendental logic.

Yet, despite its systematicity, Kant's transcendental logic is also significantly contingent. Reason—the logical faculty by means of which the intellect reflects on itself—cannot account for why the human mind possesses these *a priori* capacities and forms rather than others. We will start with an

[1] The citation of Kant follows the *Akademie-Ausgabe*, cited as AA, followed by volume number and page numbers—except for the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (KrV), where we follow the A/B system. The other abbreviations of Kant's works are Br for *Briefe*, EEKU for *Erste Einleiting in die Kritik der Urteilskraft*, HN for *Handschriftlicher Nachlass*, KpV for *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, KU for *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, MAN for *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaften*, and ÜE for *Über eine Entdeckung, nach der alle neue Kritik der reinen Vernunft durch eine ältere entbehrlich gemacht werden soll.*

[2] The English translations of Kant are cited from the *Cambridge Edition of Kant's Works*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge University Press, 1992–).

explanation of this contingent constitution of human discursivity.

The contingent constitution of human discursivity

According to Kant, reason cannot explain why our sensibility is structured by space and time, or why our understanding is structured by precisely the twelve categories grouped under the four headings of quantity, quality, relation, and modality (KrV, B145–146). Space and time are not necessarily the only possible forms of sensibility, nor are they necessarily limited to *human* sensibility. As Kant shows, reason can always conceive of non-human faculties of sensibility that share our spatiotemporal *a priori* forms, as well as ones that operate with entirely different forms (B72). Similarly, reason can always conceive of an understanding that possesses the same categories as ours yet is non-human, or one that has more, fewer, or entirely different categories, or even none at all, such as an intuitive, non-discursive understanding (B139). Moreover, reason can *conceive* of a hybrid combination such as a human-like discursive understanding paired with a non-human sensibility (B139). In short, human reason finds no necessary *a priori* ground for such a configuration of sensibility and understanding, of time, space, and the categories. Human discursivity, despite its internal systematic unity, is radically contingent.

Three structural results follow from this contingent configuration of human discursivity.

First, the self-knowledge of human discursivity is *regressive*. This, as we shall explain, is connected to the fact that the human discursive intellect only cognizes an object through the modal concepts of possibility, existence, and necessity (i.e., the categories of modality). As Kant highlights in §76 of the third *Critique*, this modal triad is the most general feature of human thought. Important in this regard is that "there can be no inference at all from mere possibility to actuality" (KU, AA 05: 401–402). The *conceptual* possibility of an object does not imply its *intuitive* actuality. For objective knowledge to be possible, the understanding must prescribe rules to sensibility, but sensibility also needs to supply the understanding with "data" if the latter is to carry out its task. The human intellect is therefore not able *immediately* to observe itself as a pure intelligence outside of its domain of application. Kant deals with this issue in the Paralogisms chapter of the first *Critique*. Here, he speaks of the "very illuminating" conundrum that "I cannot cognize as an object itself that which I must presuppose in order to cognize an object at all" (KrV, A402).[3] Reason always *regressively* posits *that* certain faculties are necessary to constitute experience, and it can only carry out this kind of reflection from within an

[3] As such, as Kant says in a handwritten note to the KrV, the categories are "incomprehensible," which is due to "the fact that we cannot have insight into the synthetic unity of apperception" (HN, AA 23: 27).

experience already constituted by those faculties. This aspect of Kant's transcendental philosophy is also reflected in the "Refutation of Idealism" section of the first *Critique*, where Kant insists that "even our inner experience … is [only] possible under the presupposition of outer experience" (KrV, B275). As we will show below, Kant repeatedly emphasizes this regressive aspect of transcendental logic (notwithstanding its systematicity) by means of the metaphor of epigenesis: it is from the observable effect—experience—that we infer the underlying grounds—i.e., the sensible forms of space and time, and the categories of the understanding—which are self-organized in such a way that they *progressively produce* said effect (B1, A66/B91, A135–136/B174–175, A139–140/B178–179, B422–423). Reason is only prompted to reflect on its own inner forms after realizing that they are thoroughly embedded in the materiality of nature. For instance, although Kant is able to show the *a priori* nature of the categories, he would never be able to do so if not by first investigating the conditions of possibility of *empirical* objects (see A82/B108). Put differently, the discovery and significance of *a priori* forms are contingent on reason's departure from and return to a *given* experience.[4] But to have insight into the ultimate ground of this givenness itself is extravagant (*überfliegend*) for reason. Thus, transcendental philosophy is characterized by an opacity it cannot avoid (which, as we will see, works through in Schelling). As promised, let us now make this more concrete by highlighting two intimately connected "cases": (1) the acquisition of *a priori* concepts in and through (2) the construction of matter as the application of these *a priori* concepts.

That is, according to Kant,

1) There is no theoretical insight into the ground or condition of the conditions of possibility of nature, besides the empirical recognition of innate fundamental forces and faculties (*Grundvermögen*) such as sensibility, imagination, and apperception or thought (see KrV, A94). As Kant explains in the KpV, "all human insight is at an end as soon as we have arrived at basic powers or basic faculties, for there is nothing through which their possibility can be conceived, and yet it may not be invented and assumed at one's discretion. Therefore, in the theoretical use of reason[,] only experience can justify us in assuming them" (KpV, AA 05: 46–47). Space, time, and the categories are not innate, but originally acquired (ÜE, AA 08: 221–223) *from those faculties*, the ground of which is unknown to us. That is, as per this legal metaphor, they are enacted *in* their role *qua* conditions of possibility of nature, and they cannot be understood in isolation from this

[4] For a more detailed treatment of this reciprocity, see James Conant, "Why Kant Is Not a Kantian," *Philosophical Topics* 44, no. 1 (2016): 75–125.

constitutive role. Thus, whether the "two stems of human cognition"—the faculties of sensibility and understanding *as such*—"may perhaps arise from a common [root]," will forever remain unknown to us (A15).

2) The application of the categories presupposes external sense impressions (i.e., the receptivity of the human mind) as its condition. It is the *sense of feeling* (*Sinn des Gefühls*) that furnishes the subject with the sensation of a filled space—or more precisely, of the repulsive force—by virtue of which the first application of the categories (primarily, the categories of quantity) to external data is made possible (MAN, AA 04: 510, 524). The empirical concept of matter is then dynamically constructed as the synthetic combination of this repulsive force with the force of attraction, the former being immediately certain while the latter being "adjoined to" the concept of matter "through inference" (MAN, AA 04: 509).[5]

Thus, Kant's theories, both of the original acquisition of *a priori* forms and of the dynamic construction of matter, constitute two manifestations of *one* single moment that eludes theoretical philosophy. For the original acquisition of the *a priori forms* takes place precisely in an original application whereby it is to be assumed that some external "impression would always be required in order to determine the cognitive faculty to the representation of an object (which is always a specific act) in the first place" (ÜE, AA 08: 222).

The *second* result is that transcendental logic, *qua* transcendental, seems inevitably open to transcendence. As Kant presents in KrV, transcendental logic turns out to split, necessarily, into the logic of truth in the Analytic and the logic *of* illusion in the Dialectic (KrV, A 62/B87, A131/B170). The former explains the principles of the *immanent* empirical use of *a priori* representations, while the latter addresses their *transcendent* use in hypostatizing a pure representation that has no corresponding object. In parallel, the concept of nature also splits into immanent concepts (categories) and transcendent ones (ideas). Logic is thus both immanent to nature (*qua* understanding) as well as outside of it (*qua* reason). Kant traces the root of such bifurcation of logic vis-à-vis nature to the discursive, logical procedures of the human mind itself.

[5] Friedman notably underscores that this section about the dynamical construction of matter, though systematic, is merely a contingent component of Kant's theory of matter. See Michael Friedman, *Kant's Construction of Nature: A Reading of the Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 569. This contingency of the dynamical character of matter, for Kant, marks the contingency of the empirical content of nature for reason. Our account suggests that reason's awareness of this contingency of nature is also the awareness of its own contingency.

What the Dialectic of KrV reveals is that the *a priori* concepts of nature—which are only objectively valid in their empirical, immanent use—have the unavoidable logical tendency to think up (*erdenken*) transcendent objects under the metaphysical demand of reason's search for the *unconditioned*. This transcendental use gives rise to transcendental illusions rather than cognitions. But transcendental illusions are so natural and unavoidable, being "not only warranted but even compelled" (A677/B705), that they *allude* to a kind of immanence, to "something true and positive" in the "production of a coherent illusory order."[6] Due to this, a transcendental illusion never ceases even if it no longer deceives after being critiqued (A297/B353–354). Moreover, when a transcendental logic of truth spells out the *a priori* elements immanent to experience, it must be presupposed that these *a priori* elements have already been used in accordance with a transcendental logic of illusion as well. The reflective-dialectical core of every transcendental move, the ground of what Kant calls the "fate [*Schicksal*]" of reason (Avii), is this split of immanence into immanence and transcendence.

Thirdly, Kant acknowledges that human reason, aware of its contingency, inevitably posits an alternative faculty: the *intellectus archetypus*—an intuitive, non-discursive intellect. While human reason cannot know (or appropriate) such a faculty, it must think it (it is structurally unavoidable). This idea plays a critical role: it reveals reason's inherent striving to overcome its own limits (*qua* discursive intellect). As Clinton Tolley notes, this alternative faculty marks "the self-overcoming of the understanding by the understanding."[7]

The organicism of reason and (biological, juridical) metaphors

This contingency of the constitution of human discursivity immediately raises a pressing question: how does human reason come to know itself, and come to know itself as a contingent faculty? As already noted, Kant employs two metaphors to account for the possibility of this self-knowledge—namely, the biological metaphor of *epigenesis* and the legal metaphor of *original acquisition*.[8]

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[6] Jörg Noller, "Logik Des Scheins. Kant Über Theoretische Und Praktische Selbsttäuschung," *Kant-Studien* 112, no. 1 (2021): 23–50.

[7] Clinton Tolley, "The Relation between Ontology and Logic in Kant," *International Yearbook for German Idealism* 12 (2016): 75–98.

[8] For Kant's biological metaphor, see, e.g., KrV, Bxxiii, Bxxxvii–xxxviii, A66/B91, B167, A832–835/B860–863. For the juridical metaphor, see, e.g., ÜE, AA 08: 221–223. Although we use the term "metaphor," we concur with Mensch that these two ideas bear more than a mere metaphorical value. See Jennifer Mensch, *Kant's Organicism: Epigenesis and the Development of Critical Philosophy* (The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 215. We keep the term to highlight that such self-references of reason occur through mutual transpositions between its own different uses. The biological metaphor is transposed from its theoretical-teleological

The common weight of these two metaphors, we argue, consists in their appeal to a retrospective, teleological analysis of an original synthetic unity. On this account, the *a priori* forms of the human mind are not simply given or innate but disclosed as the necessary components of the understanding's *activity* in synthesizing the manifold of sensible intuitions, which Kant famously puts forward under the name of the "original synthetic unity of apperception [*ursprüngliche synthetische Einheit der Apperception*]" (KrV, B136). We focus here a bit more on the biological metaphor Kant uses to characterize what is at stake in this activity.

It is in the theoretical determination of how an organism generates itself (through epigenesis) that reason notes *in concreto* the very purposive and normative character of lawgiving (*Gesetzgebung*) pertaining to its own system. Reason's theoretical reflection on the possibility of organisms gives rise to the idea of a natural purpose (*Naturzweck*). That is, the organism is reflectively judged as "cause and effect of itself" (KU, AA 05: 370), thereby displaying an internal and material purposiveness expressing a "lawfulness of the contingent" (KU, AA 05: 404; EEKU, 20: 217). Analogously, the self-knowledge of reason unfolds organically—*per intus susceptionem* rather than *per appositionem* (KrV, A833/B861)—exhibiting purposiveness, which, therefore, is nothing but a contingent lawfulness as well. This is how we understand the fact that Kant, in a letter to Marcus Herz from 1771, suggests that the categories "*divide themselves* into classes [quantity, quality, etc.] *by a few basic laws* of the intellect" (Br, AA 10: 131; our translation and italics). In other words, in dealing with the nature of the categories and the way in which they synthesize sensible intuitions, we must acknowledge the fact that we are dealing with a *self-organizing* system. But, as we know from the previous section, we must accept that the *ultimate ground* of those "few basic laws" will forever remain unknown to us.[9]

It is this biological metaphor of organic epigenesis—or more precisely, the organicism of reason—that bears on reason's theoretical pursuit of *self-knowledge* in confrontation with its own contingency.[10] In reflecting upon the

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treatment of a metaphysics of nature, and the juridical metaphor is transposed from the practical treatment of a metaphysics of morals.

[9] On this point, see Daniela Helbig and Dalia Nassar, "The Metaphor of Epigenesis: Kant, Blumenbach and Herder," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science, Part A* 58 (2016): 98–107; cf. Huaping Lu-Adler, "The Subjective Deduction and Kant's Methodological Skepticism," in *Kant's Transcendental Deduction and the Theory of Apperception: New Interpretations*, ed. Giuseppe Motta et al. (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2022), 341–360; and Zonnekeyn, Benjamin and Levi Haeck Gormez, "Varieties of Physiology in Kant: A Lockean Inspiration?" *Studi Lockiani. Ricerche sull'eta moderna*, 6.1 (2025): 119-146.

[10] For another argument for the priority of the organic model, see Mensch, *Kant's Organicism*, 125–131. Mensch argues that only the model of epigenesis allows Kant to address the issue of *origin* and *unity* with which he sets out to challenge empiricism and innatism. In contrast,

organism, reason simultaneously reflects upon its own purposive unity and the contingent constitution thereof.[11] Therefore, Kant's transcendental idealism advances the organicism of reason as the necessary consequence of its appreciation of the irreducible contingency of the discursive constitution of the human intellect.

Now, while incorporating Kant's conceptual apparatus, we will observe that Schelling radicalizes its conceptual dynamics, gesturing toward a (purportedly) more complete integration of logic and nature. First, in Kant's negative notion of the *intellectus archetypus*, Schelling sees the latent ground of reason's discursive self-articulation, namely the common "unknown root" (KrV, A15/B29) of sensibility and the understanding, along with their *a priori* forms. Second, in Kant's depiction of logic as both immanently constituting nature as well as simultaneously standing opposed to nature, Schelling sees a lawful genetic account of both logic and nature from one and the same original synthesis.[12] Third, in Kant's regressive program of reason's self-critique, Schelling sees a viable method for intelligence to unravel and recollect its natural history.

The Contingency and Organicism in Early Schelling's Logic of Evolution

Schelling's approach to the unity of logic and nature takes the form of a genetic account of mind or self-consciousness on the one hand, and of nature on the other. From this perspective, both are conceived not as static entities but rather as infinite processes of becoming (*Werden*) or evolution (*Evolution*). Their unity consists in their shared logic of evolution—the necessary forms and principles of their parallel geneses. This logic, articulated in both Schelling's transcendental philosophy and *Naturphilosophie*, defines how self-consciousness and nature must be thought by self-conscious intelligence itself.

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we emphasize here the continuity of the theoretical use of reason in understanding the lawfulness of the contingent shown in a natural product as well as in reason itself.

[11] For more on this point, see Gertrudis Van de Vijver and Levi Haeck, "Judging Organization: A Plea for Transcendental Logic in Philosophy of Biology," in *Organization in Biology*, ed. Matteo Mossio (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2024), 59–84.

[12] Although Matthews does not directly engage with Kant's transcendental logic of illusion, he illuminatingly presents Schelling's organic form of philosophy, as an alternative to Kant, as positing "an ideal of immanent transcendence realized through a logic of production." See Bruce Matthews, *Schelling's Organic Form of Philosophy: Life as the Schema of Freedom* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011), 28. However, Matthews problematically characterizes the organization almost as nothing more than a correlate of the dynamical category of community and reciprocity (14–20), which may explain his tendency to downplay the role of the teleological idea of organism but favor that of the aesthetic idea of the sublime in reason's self-grounding (79, 92–102).

In what follows, we elaborate this logic of evolution and demonstrate how it captures the contingency and organicism of human intelligence in its self-consciousness. We show that, similarly to Kant's transcendental logic, Schelling's genetic account acknowledges these features as structural tensions intrinsic to idealist thinking. Yet, unlike Kant, who treats this contingency as bound to the fact that a discursive mind can only know the conditions of possibility of nature, but not the condition of the conditions—Schelling sees it as "intellectual gravitation [*Schwere*]" (SW III: 525),[13] around which intelligence moves, produces, and recollects its intellectual and, moreover, natural history.

The logic of evolution of self-consciousness and nature

According to Schelling, the evolution of both self-consciousness and nature originates in the original identity and duality of an infinite activity and its limitation (*Begrenzung*), within an original intuition. It is a dual relation, since the limitation curtails the activity; yet it expresses identity, since the limitation arises not extraneously but as an immanent moment of self-limitation within the activity itself.

In the case of nature, the original identity and duality is articulated in the relation of the infinite productivity of nature and its inhibition (*Hemmung*). The inhibition of nature is crucially a self-limitation: "if Nature is absolute productivity, then the ground of this limitation cannot lie outside of it" (SW III: 287, also 308).[14] In the case of self-consciousness, the same structure is articulated in the relation of the infinite self-intuiting and self-objectifying activity of the ideal I and its self-intuition as real and objective. Here too, the self-intuition of the ideal I is a self-limitation: "Intuiting and limiting are originally one" (III: 403).[15] The logic of evolution thus accounts for the emergence of determinate products of nature and determinate acts of intuition from the dynamic structure of such an original synthesis, that is, from the infinite activity and its limitation combined in their identity. That is, it accounts for how the single infinite evolution unfolds into determinacy (intensity) and manifoldness (extension) in finitude. In the *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*—and its separately published *Introduction*—and in *System of Transcendental Philosophy*, Schelling articulates the evolution of nature and of self-consciousness precisely along these two interwoven lines.

With respect to determinacy and intensity, the logic of evolution

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[13] F.W.J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, trans. Peter Heath (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978), 149.
[14] F.W.J. Schelling, *First Outline of a System of Philosophy of Nature*, trans. Keith R. Peterson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 204, 218–219.
[15] Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 54.

determines the rule by which the infinite evolution is retarded to an infinitely small velocity (*Geschwindigkeit*), although it does not cease:

1) Considered absolutely, the original infinite activity would generate an *infinite evolution* proceeding with *infinite velocity*. In such absolute infinity and immediacy, nature and the I would not appear as the object of intuition and would not attain reality.
2) By virtue of the original limitation, the original infinite activity would generate an *infinite evolution* proceeding *with finite velocity*. This evolution would yield the continuous formation of nature and the complete intuition of the I as both subject and object—but it would not yield determinate natural products such as inorganic and organic products, nor determinate acts of the I such as sensation, productive intuition, and reflection.
3) Now, for determinate products of nature and acts of intuition to emerge, the original infinite activity must generate an *infinite evolution* proceeding *with the infinitely small velocity*. This is only possible, Schelling maintains, through the infinite bifurcation (*Entzweiung*) of the infinite activity at the point of limitation—or equivalently, through the limitation and the simultaneous "infinite extension of the limit [*unendlichen Erweiterung der Schranke*]" (SW III: 384).[16]

With respect to manifoldness and extension, the logic of evolution determines the rule by means of which the single original duality and evolution multiplies into a series of subordinated dualities and evolutions.

1) The *original duality* determines the *outermost limit* of evolution's extension.
2) By virtue of the original limitation, i.e., the synthesization of the original duality, the original single infinite activity would generate a single evolution of one single product as the absolute synthesis of the original duality; it would yield an original product (*Urprodukt*) of nature or a complete intuition of the I as both subject and object.
3) For the manifold products of nature and acts of intuition to emerge, the limitation must always be partial—or equivalently, the limit must always be extended, so that there always arises a new, subordinate duality as the residue or surplus of the original duality at the point of

[16] Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 39. In this article, we opt for "limit" rather than "boundary" to translate "Schranke" in the sense of "Grenze." For the corresponding articulation in *Naturphilosophie*, see SW III: 19, 287–291 (*First Outline*, 19, 204–207).

> limitation. This subordinate duality resides within the limit of the original duality and remains sustained by it. It is to be synthesized, again partially, so that a further subordinate duality arises as confined and sustained by the antecedent, partially synthesized duality. The process continues *ad infinitum*.[17]

It is now clear that the same logic of the *infinite extension of the limit* determines the rule of retardation (intensity) and multiplication (extension) for nature and self-consciousness. To illustrate this logic, we take the first epoch of the evolution of self-consciousness as an example.

In the evolution of self-consciousness, the original act of self-consciousness posits the original limit. This limit separates two activities of the I: (1) the ideal I in the illimitable self-intuition, and (2) the real I that becomes the object of intuition, i.e., limited. Now the ideal I, as the infinite activity of self-intuition, seeks to intuit itself as being limited as such. That is, it strives to bring the limit itself into intuition. As a result, the limit that originally separates the ideal I and the real I is admitted into the ideal I. And moreover, the ideal activity bifurcates into two: (1) the infinite ideal activity that continues to transcend any limit, and (2) the finite activity that is separated from the infinite activity by the newly admitted limit and thereby becomes the real. What is crucial is that the "limit is still always the same" (SW III: 425),[18] but it is continuously intuited and admitted by the infinite ideal I. In this repeated ideal admission of one and the same original limit, the limit itself is never completely brought into intuition as an object, as real, but is extended into the ideal I itself, over and over again. Thus, the evolution of self-consciousness proceeds by means of the *infinite extension of the limit*, and each extension (i.e., admission) leads to a new limitation and bifurcation of the ideal I. This is the genetic approach to "the task of theoretical philosophy"—that is, to explain "the ideality of limit," i.e., to explain "how even the ideal activity, hitherto assumed as illimitable, can in fact be limited" (III: 399).[19]

In accordance with this logic of evolution, self-consciousness unfolds through a series of determinate acts of self-intuition, each re-idealizing the original limit and thereby producing a new significance or determination of that limit. The original limit is the postulate of the primordial act of self-consciousness, separating the ideal I and the real I. The self-intuition of the I in this original limitation, that is, the synthesization of this original duality, is

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[17] For corresponding articulations in *Naturphilosophie*, see SW III: 309–317 (*First Outline*, 219–225); for those in transcendental philosophy, III: 411–412 (*System of Transcendental Idealism*, 60–61).

[18] Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 71.

[19] Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 50.

sensation (SW III: 405).[20] In sensation, the limit appears to the ideal I as the distinction between the sensing (*Empfindendes*) and the sensed (*Empfundenes*). This limit, however, is further idealized by the act of productive intuition. Productive intuition is thus "sensation with consciousness" (III: 462),[21] and the self-intuition of the I in sensation as both sensing and sensed. In productive intuition, the limit is reconfigured yet again as the distinction of the thing in itself and the I in itself.[22] Thus, from the original act of self-consciousness, through sensation, and to productive intuition, self-consciousness unfolds the first epoch of its intellectual history.

Despite the hitherto parallel presentation of self-consciousness and nature, it should be noted that Schelling, in the *Universal Deduction of the Dynamic Process* and *On the True Concept of the Philosophy of Nature*, advances the primordiality of nature and the priority of *Naturphilosophie*. Along this line, the entire evolution of nature is a "constant self-construction of matter that is only recapitulated at different stages" (SW IV: 4).[23] Self-consciousness is thus only one—though the highest—potency of the production of nature, following the potencies of matter and organism. Therefore, self-consciousness is "a process of coming to awareness through which nature becomes partially transparent to itself in the form of the rational individual."[24] As we show below, this partial transparency of nature is made possible precisely against (and thus alludes to) the persistent opacity of natural history, of which a rational individual becomes aware only as its own contingency.

The contingency in evolution

It is in terms of this logic of evolution that Schelling recognizes the contingency of intelligence vis-à-vis nature, yet in a different way from Kant. According to Schelling, the contingency irreducibly lies in the relationship between the *original limitation in general* and the *determinate limitation* of intuition.

As outlined above, the original limitation is the primordial act of self-consciousness that posits itself in self-intuition. The infinite ideal I thereby appears to itself as a series of determinate acts and unfolds into finitude. In this sense, the original limitation expresses nothing but the general finitude of

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[20] Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 55–56.
[21] Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 100.
[22] For the place of the thing in itself in the logic of evolution, see SW III: 417–424 (*System of Transcendental Idealism*, 65–71). The thing in itself is nothing but "the shadow of the ideal activity, now over the limit, which is thrown back to the self through intuition, and is to this extent a product of the self" (III: 422 (*System of Transcendental Idealism*, 68)).
[23] Schelling, *Allgemeine Deduktion des dynamischen Processes*.
[24] Dieter Sturma, "The Nature of Subjectivity: The Critical and Systematic Function of Schelling's Philosophy of Nature," in *Debates in Nineteenth-Century European Philosophy*, trans. Nicholas Walker (Routledge, 2015), 109–20.

human intelligence: "The original limitation, which we have in common with all rational beings, consists in the fact of our intrinsic finitude [*wir überhaupt endlich sind*]" (SW III: 409).[25] This general finitude means that human intelligence is necessarily situated—it must have a temporality, a viewpoint, and an order of representations, that is, a history and a universe.

By contrast, the determinate limitation is that by virtue of which empirical consciousness emerges. Intelligence thereby assumes *this* specific history, viewpoint, and order of representations as its universe rather than another. Intelligence is thus *determinately* situated in our world of gravity, life, and historical contingency. In this sense, the determinate limitation is the limitation of the original limitation, namely the second, particular limitation of intelligence.

A problem arises, however, provided that the *determinate, particular, second* limitation arises in intelligence simultaneously with *the original limitation in general* in a single act. For a limitation is determinate, but no *a priori* deduction of this determinacy follows from the general structure of limitation itself. Therefore, for an intelligence already determinately limited, this determinate limitation itself appears sheerly contingent. In Schelling's words, determinate limitation "exists absolutely [*schlecthin*] because it exists, and is as it is because that is how it is" (SW III: 425).[26] It denotes a pure *thisness*, in which intelligence necessarily finds itself *determined* yet not *grounded*. For Schelling, this situation of contingency is what realists describe as "destiny or fate [*Schicksal*]" (III: 482).[27]

This contingency continually structures the entire evolution of self-consciousness. Intelligence strives to intuit—to limit and determine—the original limitation through the act of *productive intuition* but simply finds it contingent. Namely, intelligence cannot but continually re-enact its self-intuition at the limit and cannot but repeatedly intuit this limit as both internal and external to the ideal I. In accordance with the logic of evolution, a series of productive intuitions arises, each partially synthesizing the duality that conditions it. Meanwhile, within this series of productive intuitions, the limit successively assumes a series of distinctions: first, between the *thing in itself* and the *I in itself*, then between the *sensible object* and *inner sense*, and lastly between space and time. In this most recent consciousness of temporality, the perceived contingency is manifested in the constant feeling of the present (*Gegenwart*) as its self-feeling (*Selbstgefühl*) of intelligence (SW III: 466),[28] a feeling of compulsion to seek the ground of its presence in the past (*Vergangenheit*). The determinate limitation, repeatedly unfolded in the productive intuition, is now

[25] Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 59.
[26] Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 71.
[27] Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 116.
[28] Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 103.

"precisely that by virtue of which the intelligence, at the very outset of empirical consciousness, must appear to itself as in a present, as held fast in a particular moment of the time series" (III: 482).[29] In this time series, intelligence proceeds to produce its object first as *substance* and *accident* in space and time, then as *cause* and *effect* in temporal succession, and lastly as a *community* in reciprocal causation. The contingency is thus continually confronted in the series of acts of productive intuition—namely, in the repeated production of objects as spatiotemporal and as structured by the Kantian categories of relation.

This sense of contingency also fundamentally structures the evolution of nature. Genetically corresponding to the intellectual act of productive intuition, the production of matter in nature primarily demonstrates the very same paradox between the original and the determinate limitations. The original limitation in the production of matter is the attractive (retarding) force that limits the repulsive (expanding) force—that is, the infinite productivity of nature. Through this original limitation, the two forces fill a space and produce matter. Yet, Schelling points out, for a space to be filled to a determinate degree so that matter possesses determinate qualities, the limiting act of the attractive force must itself be determinately limited. This determinate limitation, however, is not entailed by the original limitation itself and thus appears entirely contingent. Schelling argues that insofar as this determinate limitation must be self-posited in the productivity of nature, it can be nothing other than "the universal concatenation [*allgemeine Verkettung*] of all matters" and the resultant reciprocal limitation among them (SW IV: 29).[30] This universal reciprocal limitation among different matters, marked by their qualities, is the "empirical datum" in the production of matter (IV: 29).[31] It is the irreducible contingency of nature in which the intuiting and reflecting intelligences find themselves entangled. In such an entanglement, intelligence cannot reach the pure originality of nature.

In the organic production of nature, this contingency becomes more pronounced. Following Kant, Schelling characterizes the organism as a self-organizing whole, a unity of lawfulness and contingency (SW II: 40–42, 515–529, III: 65–66).[32] What Schelling brings beyond the critical Kant is, as is well known, the ontological-genetic twist of idealism. The organic production is

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[29] Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 115.

[30] Schelling, *Allgemine Deduktion des dynamischen Processes.*

[31] Cf. "Quality is originally absolutely inconstructible, and it must be, because it is the limit of all construction by virtue of which every construction is a determinate one" (Schelling, *First Outline*, 22).

[32] F.W.J. Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, trans. Errol E. Harris and Peter Heath (Cambridge University Press, 1988), 30–33; *Von der Weltseele*, SW II: 515–529; *First Outline*, 51.

now one potency of nature, and indeed "the symbol [*Sinnbild*] of the original construction of all [natural] products" (III: 306),[33] including matter and self-consciousness. It is precisely because organic production is the second potency of natural production that it opens a perspective for the dynamic evolution of nature that lies obscure, at the first potency (matter), in the already qualitatively determined matter. For, at the second potency, the evolution of nature is limited by *real synthetic products* of the first potency; the organic product is thus a "doubled [*doublirtes*] product" (III: 304),[34] since what has already been a product (inorganic) of nature *becomes* a product (organic) of nature again. Accordingly, the stages of dynamic evolution from its occasioning to its recapitulation are itself recapitulated in the empirically observable phenomena of metamorphosis, self-reproduction, and procreation of organic products *in* nature.

The contingency inherent in the logic of evolution is thus nested at every stage of evolution, from the production of matter, through the production of organic beings, to the production of self-consciousness.

The necessary organicism and self-reflection

Given the contingency of empirical determinacy, and in consequence of the logic of evolution, Schelling concludes that intelligence is organic. Organicism is precisely the third limitation that necessarily limits the second, determinate limitation.

Through the second limitation, intelligence has found itself placed in the infinite succession of representations in time. In this succession, the objects appear as substances and accidents, as causes and effects, in relations of reciprocal determination. Yet the illimitable ideal activity of self-intuition continuously strives to intuit its own *whole* succession as its object. To achieve this, the third limitation is necessary—the limitation of succession. This third limitation must on the one hand be part of the succession, since intelligence is now the succession itself and its limitation is always self-limitation, and on the other hand, it must be the intuition of the whole succession. In this way, it cannot but arise as a self-returning activity of succession itself. Univocally defined in transcendental philosophy and *Naturphilosophie*, this "self-reverting succession, statically represented" is organization (SW III: 491);[35] and if sustained by an inner principle of motion, it is life or living organization. The organism as a living organization is on this account the necessary form of (self-)intuition (*Anschauungsart*) that intelligence assumes so as to intuit the totality of its production as an object. Moreover, insofar as each moment of

[33] Schelling, *First Outline*, 217, translation modified.
[34] Schelling, *First Outline*, 216.
[35] Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 122. Cf. *Von der Weltseele*, SW II: 349.

organization is a new moment of succession, intelligence thus extends itself to intuit this moment within its organism. Its organism is therefore continually restored as much as it is re-configured, *ad infinitum*. Now, infinite determination is nothing other than individualization. The third limitation is therefore that "the intelligence must appear to itself as an organic individual" (III: 495).[36]

There are two crucial results of this third limitation. First, the deduction of organism as a necessary form of intelligence also constitutes the transcendental deduction of organic nature as the necessary organ of self-consciousness. It is in intuiting the whole universe—as a universal organism—and its different organic products that the productive intelligence is so extended and organized that it intuits itself as "identical with" (SW III: 494)[37] a productive individual organism. This identical organic individual is the organized body in which intelligence dwells. Being identical to intelligence, this particular body in turn constitutes the perfect organ of intelligence that offers "at every moment the perfect expression of its inner nature" (SW III: 497, cf. 490–91).[38]

Secondly, the organism of intelligence closes its production within intuition, since the organism is the identity of the intuiting and the intuited in an infinite activity. It follows that the ideal activity of self-intuition, striving to transcend the organism (the third limitation) to intuit this organism of intelligence as an object, gives rise to a new act, distinct from productive intuition. This new act is free reflection. Therefore, the organism marks the shift between the *standpoint of reflection* and *the standpoint of intuition*. Between reflection and organism (an intuition) as two acts of intelligence, "there lies as intermediate stage the whole multiplicity of the objective world, its products and phenomena" (SW III: 455).[39] However, the reflection is nothing other than the "free imitation, free recapitulation of the original series of acts into which the one act of self-consciousness evolves" (III: 397).[40] It is the free capacity to *abstract* from and, by virtue of that, to *accompany* and *recapture* the evolution of intelligence in intuition. If the productive intuition of intelligence has to be an organism, as Schelling deduces, philosophical reflection as a retrospective analysis must take the organism as its symbol.

Let us now, on this basis, return to the two specific moments of contingency by which we have characterized Kant's transcendental logic and examine how Schelling responds to them.

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[36] In *Naturphilosophie*, Schelling maintains the metaphysical and epistemological equivalence of organization, interiority, and individuality. See *Von der Weltseele*, SW II: 518–520, and *First Outline*, SW III: 69–70, 83.

[37] Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 125.

[38] Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 127, 121–123.

[39] Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 95.

[40] Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 49.

1) *On the acquisition of* a priori *forms*: Schelling maintains that a higher principle must ground the seemingly contingent origin and configuration of the *a priori* forms of human reason. That is, the mechanism of the Kantian original acquisition can and must be articulated. Theoretically speaking, this mechanism (which would have to be a mechanism of intuition), as Schelling explains, is the yet-to-be-disclosed evolution, by means of which the original I epigenetically comes to a series of self-intuitions, which is to say that the universe epigenetically produces its full metamorphosis. Methodologically, any person can undertake this idealist inquiry for and from within itself—"everyone can regard himself as the object of these investigations" (SW III: 483).[41] The logic of this evolution is disclosed by one's progressive abstraction, via reflection, from one's developed intellectual intuition, that is, from the serial limitations of intelligence.

First, one abstracts from the *third* limitation of intelligence (one's organic individuality) and obtains the absolute intelligence as productive intuition; second, one abstracts from the *second* limitation (productive intuition) and obtains the absolute I as the unity of subject-object in the original synthetic act of self-intuition. Through this progressive abstraction within the domain of transcendental philosophy, one brings to the reflective view the starting point of the evolution of self-consciousness, from whence it unfolds to successive epochs and acts of self-intuition.

However, this abstraction has a twofold sense. On the one hand, it is a retrospective abstraction in transcendental philosophy, whereby the intellectual intuition of the I gradually abstracts from its progressively unfolded determinations to expose its unconscious origin. Schelling articulates this transcendental sense of abstraction in his *System of Transcendental Philosophy*. On the other hand, it is also the entire abstraction from the idealism of the I, namely from the constantly self-conscious "identity of the activity and the intuition of this activity" (SW IV: 85)[42] as the determining principle of the intellectual evolution of self-consciousness. In this second sense, abstraction initiates *Naturphilosophie*, namely an idealism of nature. From the persistent standpoint of idealism, one now inquires into "the pure subject-object" (IV: 86)—pure from the subjective side of the subject-object already "potentized" to self-consciousness (=I)—and thereby into "the pure objective" side of this subject-object. This pure

[41] Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 116.
[42] Schelling, *Ueber den wahren Begriff der Naturphilosophie.*

objective subject-object is what one calls nature and where *Naturphilosophie* begins. In light of *Naturphilosophie*, the self-intuition of the I is revealed as a potentized evolution of nature. The act of abstraction is in this sense an act of de-potentization. Schelling elaborates on this dynamical sense of abstraction in *On the True Concept of the Philosophy of Nature*.

This is how intelligence, from its organism of intuition and via transcendental abstraction, reflects upon its original act of self-consciousness. This is also how intelligence, from one and the same organism of intuition and via dynamical abstraction, reveals to itself its physical provenance and natural history. The Kantian and Fichtean transcendental ego, which otherwise sees its epigenesis from nowhere other than the intellectual vantage point of self-knowledge, will now become a subject that recollects the "transcendental memory [*Gedächtniß*]" (SW IV: 77)[43] of its own natural history and finally realizes its original identity with nature.

2) *On the construction of matter*: Schelling takes issue with the "empirical datum" in the construction of matter, as does, as we have seen, Kant. For Schelling, this empirical register lies not in the subject's sense of feeling (*Sinn des Gefühls*), behind the opacity and obscurity of which Kant, according to Schelling, hides the very synthetic moment of *filling space* that is more than a mere concurrence of expansive and attractive forces. It is rather the universal concatenation of all matters external to one another yet synthesized in a single self-producing nature that really counts (SW IV: 29).[44] According to Schelling, Kant indeed points to the original duality by constructing matter out of two original forces. But his pure analysis of an empirical concept of matter into two forces presupposes and thus *overlooks* the synthetic moment of constructing matter by too quickly resorting to sensation. Schelling sees Kant's definition of sensibility—the capacity (receptivity) to acquire representations through affectation by objects (KrV, A19/B33)—as an all too quick shortcut. It eludes the central question to be first studied: How are things represented at all? How does the affectation happen at all? According to Schelling, philosophical reflection finds here only a parallel, or rather, an anti-parallel move of (1) the real side of self-consciousness (i.e., the objective side of the subjective subject-object in intellectual intuition) towards nature and of (2) the ideal side of

[43] Schelling, *Allgemeine Deduktion des dynamischen Processes*.
[44] Schelling, *Allgemeine Deduktion des dynamischen Processes.*

nature (i.e., the subjective side of the objective subject-object in the unconscious intuition) towards the I.

Lastly, the organism holds a crucial status in Schelling's early *Naturphilosophie* and transcendental philosophy. From the perspective of the evolution of nature, the organism is one potency of the production of nature, on the basis of which intelligence arises at a higher potency, yet with which it always remains entangled. There exists no pure intelligence that is not entangled with an organism, just as there exists no pure organism that is not entangled with matter (SW IV: 77).[45] From the perspective of the evolution of intelligence, the organism is the third limitation of the I, at which the act of *self-intuition* of intelligence becomes the *self-identification* with organic nature and at which intelligence shifts from the standpoint of intuition to that of free reflection. Again, there exists no pure intelligence that does not identify itself with an organic individual and that does not begin to reflect itself as such. Organism is the real in nature, *in* which one necessarily sees the inextricable ideal that makes it the real it is. It is the ideal in intelligence, *in* which one necessarily sees the inextricable real that makes it the ideal it is. Organism is such a middle point of the idealism of our finitude, empiricity, and contingency, the *Monogramm* (III: 611)[46] of the original identity of the unconscious and conscious productions in nature and intelligence. From here, human intelligence takes issue with both nature and logic, in view of their unity, in terms of their logic of evolution.

However, an opacity remains in early Schelling's system. It is the opacity of both nature and intelligence, at the very point of their coming into one. On the side of nature, the original duality of nature, in which the organism has its final condition, can only receive a transcendental rather than natural-philosophical treatment. Here comes the unavoidable "turning point [*Wendepunkt*]" (SW III: 268)[47] between *Naturphilosophie* and transcendental philosophy. But on the side of intelligence, it is only through the unconscious self-identification with an individual organism that intelligence shifts from intuition to reflection, and led by reflection (abstraction), obtains this "turning point" from thinking intelligence as intelligence to thinking nature as nature. It is the same opacity that characterized Kant's project, in which all transcendental reflection remained conditioned by its empirical playing field. It is also the opacity that echoes in what Foucault calls the "anthropological postulate" of man as an "empirico-transcendental doublet" in the analytic of finitude. That is, man becomes "a being such that knowledge will be attained

[45] Schelling, *Allgemeine Deduktion des dynamischen Processes.*
[46] Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 218.
[47] Schelling, *First Outline*, 192.

in him of what renders all knowledge possible" and for the very same reason, man also becomes "the locus of misunderstanding—of misunderstanding that constantly exposes his thought to the risk of being swamped by his own being, and also enables him to recover his integrity on the basis of what eludes him."[48]

Conclusion

We articulated in this article how Kant and Schelling address the issue of the duality of logic and nature. Although their approaches diverge, they nevertheless foreground the contingency and organicism of human intelligence as the inherent tension that fundamentally structures idealist thinking. Crucially, for both, organisms in nature offer an image (*Bild*) for the "secret bond" and "hidden organ" (SW II: 55)[49] that brings logic and nature together. In thinking the organism, and especially our own organism, we glimpse this secrecy and hiddenness of nature, and of our own nature as part of it.[50]

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[48] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (Routledge, 2005), 350, 347, 352.

[49] Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, 41.

[50] This paper is based on the PhD dissertations of the authors; see Xuansong Liu, *A Transcendental Conception of Living Organisation: Kant, Schelling, and their Relevance to Darwin* (Diss. Ghent University, 2025); Levi Haeck, *Kant's Epigenetic Segue into the Synthetic A Priori: Deriving the Categories as a Critique of Predication* (Diss. Ghent University, 2024).

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Schelling's Autogenetic Absolute and the Transformative Power of Love: Questioning the Sources of a Moving System

Rebecca Reichenberg

—It is the spirit that works and weaves in us,
until every fight has been fought through by love[1]

Among the philosophies of German Idealism, none is more often described as marked by internal tensions than Schelling's, which nevertheless retained, throughout his life, the ambition to be a system. This claim (and its discussed "failure")[2] may be considered one of the most striking controversies, not only particular to Schelling's reception but to his own thinking. The tensions that the present article aims to interrogate concern the form and the essential content that the Schellingian system had taken on by 1809.

Few problems express the tensions of the Schellingian system in such a multifaceted yet systematic and continuous manner as the problem of *identity and difference*, which addresses the *transition* (*Übergang*) from the unconditional to the conditional, the infinite to the finite—a transition that the early Schelling

[1] "Es ist der Geist, der in uns wirkt und webet, bis alle Kämpfe durchgekämpft die Liebe." August Graf von Platen-Hallermünde, "Prolog," in *Lyrische Blätter*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1821), viii.

[2] For the highly influential narrative that shaped the renewed reception of Schelling at the beginning of the twentieth century, see in particular Martin Heidegger, *Schelling: Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit (1809)*, ed. Ingrid Schüßler (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1988), 279.

already identifies as *the* "problem of *all* philosophy" (SW I: 314).[3] By thematizing Schelling's *concept of love* in what follows, I break down this problem, which is the problem of the beginning in a threefold sense: the origin of the world, the foundation of the system, and the *beginning* as the very essence of freedom (the philosopher's included).

And since this article primarily deals with the *foundation of the Schellingian system* between 1801 and 1810 and its transformation in terms of the theory of first principles and the logic of identity, one might ask, "What does love have to do with it?"

Love constitutes Schelling's understanding of longing (*Sehnsucht*) as well as of the all-transcending purity (*Lauterkeit*) and accompanies Schelling's remarks wherever he speaks of becoming—first and foremost, of the becoming of God through God's birth. In Schelling, love constitutes an entire phenomenology of divine eros and human desire. Love is indissolubly linked to the understanding of the magic chain of *Kabiri* and to the voice of the Law of the World (*Weltgesetz*) that wants to bring everything to a decision.[4] For Schelling, love is the essence of the soul and finds itself at the heart of his understanding of philosophy. As Schelling shows in the *Ages of the World*, love structures, even *gives*, time—*to ourselves no less than to the divine*—since only love befriends time and future.[5] That said, love is undoubtedly the core concept for Schellingian eschatology—extending all the way to the *Johannine Church* and the community of spirit—and one should not be suspicious about this "overloaded" concept if one considers that, when it comes to the highest (and lowest and middle) terms of Schellingian thinking, a whole "vocabulary" of love is Schelling's preferred language.

This is a language that, like every language, is more than mere language, yet one whose philosophical seriousness and scope—especially in Schelling's most famous writings—are still too often underestimated. More specifically, it is frequently reduced to a legacy of Romanticism, a theological accessory, religious dogmatism, or merely poetic and personal sentimentality. Instead, this article argues, love should be grasped as by far the *most outstanding* philosophical

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[3] F.W.J. Schelling, "Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism," in *The Unconditional in Human Knowledge: Four Early Essays (1794–1796)*, trans. Fritz Marti (Lewisburg: Associated University Presses, 1980), 177.

[4] For the reference to the *Kabiri*, see *Die Gottheiten von Samothrake* (SW VIII: 345–423), SW VIII: 352–359, 365–369. For the germ of the motif of the *Weltgesetz* in the Freedom Essay, see SW VII: 374. For its further development, see, for instance, F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophie der Mythologie* (SW XII: 1–674), SW XII: 142–143, and F.W.J. Schelling, *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung*, ed. Walter E. Erhardt (Hamburg: Meiner, 1992), 622.

[5] See 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), 145 (WA: 85).

matter (*Gegenstand*) of the Freedom Essay of 1809—a *matter* that is the treatise's systematic and hermeneutic knot, and thereby transformative for Schelling's subsequent trajectory. It is a trajectory characterized by a thinking where love enters, from 1809 onward, into inseparable synonymy with the *processuality of freedom*, becoming both its object and ethos—in short, the *meaning* of Schellingian philosophy.

Love thus appears as the hermeneutic glue of Schellingian thinking, connecting different parts of his work and revealing the systematic unity that undergirds it. However, love is also, as this article seeks to outline, the very problematic—viewed from a systematic and genetic perspective—that first *raises* and *intensifies* the aforementioned tension of identity and difference and thus brings the problem of *transition* into *heightened focus*. And this is insofar as *love*—designating, from 1809 onward (in an omnipresent and recurring Pauline reminiscence), Schelling's own system—denotes the all-unifying, all-recovering Absolute *as well as* precisely the moment of irreducible *difference* and the explicit *limit* of philosophy, marking moments of irrecoverableness and withdrawal. In 1809, love *literally* becomes the highest point of the "*via negativa* [*negative way*]" of Schelling's classical *philosophy of identity*, *and* a subversive source in his thinking, placing itself at the center of a *second beginning* from within.

To elaborate on this, I will concentrate on the period between 1801 and 1810, which spans a conceptual horizon from the *Presentation of My System of Philosophy* (Schelling's first, far more hermetic system) to the system presented in the *Stuttgart Seminars,* which I take as a perfectly compatible iteration of the Freedom Essay. Taking this background into account, I will argue that the widely-recognized hinge function[6] of the Freedom Essay in Schelling's work is to be seen in a *transformation* of Schelling's concept of identity, marking the last major shift in the problem axis of his philosophy. The main thesis of this text is that the systematic and hermeneutic core of this transformation is to be understood in terms of Schelling's notion of love.

This article will proceed in four steps or sections. First, I will focus on Schelling's classical philosophy of identity and its *transformation*, which Jean-François Marquet aptly describes, very concisely, by stating that Schelling "detached himself from identity, broke his concept of identity precisely with this identity itself, and could henceforth reengage with it in a new totality"[7]: This is a transformation that I in turn wish to outline by showing how it not only culminates in Schelling's notion of love in 1809, but is fundamentally driven by it. It is this crucial shift that reaches its peak in the synonymity between identity and love, *systematically* developed for the first time in the

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[6] See Sean J. McGrath, *The Philosophical Foundations of the Late Schelling: The Turn to the Positive* (Edinburgh University Press, 2021), 37.

[7] See Jean-François Marquet, *Liberté et Existence. Étude sur la formation de la philosophie de Schelling* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), 363.

Freedom Essay and radiating outward into his late philosophy (section 1). I will then focus on the Freedom Essay by showing how the "motility of love" (SW VII: 373)[8]—far from being merely a theological ornamentation of this treatise *and* far from being a leitmotif found only in the Freedom Essay—becomes the epitome of Schelling's autogenetic Absolute in 1809, the very essence of the *processuality* of freedom (section 2), and thus provides the *framework* for grasping the essence and the reality of human freedom (section 3). The final two sections illuminate how this crucial transformation is, in the direct transition to the *Ages of the World*, already clearly inscribed in the *Stuttgart Seminars* of 1810. I will focus systematically on two essential aspects that I see as part of the direct heritage of Schelling's 1809 understanding of love. The first is the intertwining of epistemological and anthropological inquiry that comes with the transformation of the notion of identity and is schematized in the doctrine of potencies of the human spirit, i.e., the anthropology of 1810. The second aspect is the Pauline Pantheism that becomes the name of Schelling's "new" system—hence, a *system of love*—one that Schelling will reclaim and continuously develop until his late philosophy (section 4).

I use the term *autogenetic Absolute* because it highlights the legacy of the philosophy of identity within Schelling's later work and best captures the transition between the *Presentation* and the *Stuttgart Seminars*.

Absolute Identity and Divine Difference—Shifting Indifference

In the *Presentation of My System of Philosophy* (1801), Schelling's philosophy of identity emerges through his attempt to reconcile transcendental philosophy and philosophy of nature, starting from their "indifference-point" (SW IV: 108).[9] While Schelling's earlier efforts attempt to assert the autonomy of his philosophy of nature over the transcendental philosophy of Fichtean imprint, the *Presentation* is intended to demonstrate the *absolute unity-point* of both sciences and to provide philosophy as such with a higher *foundational principle*

[8] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006), 41. Henceforth referred to as Freedom Essay. *Motility of love* is Schmidt's and Love's translation of "Beweglichkeit der Liebe" (*beweglich* literally denotes that which can move). While this motif undoubtedly belongs at the center of the Freedom Essay's theodicy, the present article argues that the *Beweglichkeit der Liebe* should be understood much more broadly as the very quintessence of the processuality that, with the Freedom Essay, comes to occupy the core of Schelling's thought and must be grasped explicitly against the background of the transformation of his notion of *absolute identity*.

[9] F.W.J. Schelling, *Presentation of My System of Philosophy*, in: *The Philosophical Rupture between Fichte and Schelling: Selected Texts and Correspondence (1800–1802)*, ed. and trans. Michael G. Vater and David W. Wood (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006), 142.

than the one found in Fichte. Following earlier efforts to find a basis for the system in *one absolute principle*, it is here in the *Presentation* that reason (*Vernunft*), understood as the total indifference of the subjective and objective, and with it, *absolute identity itself*, fulfills the function of a unifying principle. It becomes the absolute principle of Schelling's "own" system.

I recall this briefly to point out, on the one hand, that this absolute identity will remain the system's principle, at least explicitly, up to the Stuttgart system; and, on the other hand, that Schelling will defend this notion of absolute identity throughout large parts of his philosophy of identity: *as absolute indifference*—that is, identity without opposition or qualitative difference—whose status as the very essence of the Absolute is expressed in his effort to conceive all difference as inherently *quantitative*.[10]

Though the *Bruno* text already presents a more dynamic understanding of identity—the "identity of identity and opposition [*Einheit der Einheit und des Gegensatzes*]" (SW IV: 239)[11]—that, *on paper*, does not differ greatly from subsequent formulations—one could ask if Schelling's classical philosophy of identity does not finally fail to answer *how* absolute identity *itself* is supposed to be the principle *and origin* of movement. Schelling, however, insists on defining absolute identity as an indifference that ultimately excludes (*qualitative*)

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[10] For the quantitative difference, or the "*differencia formalis*" (SW IV: 127, addition [*Zusatz*]), see, in particular: SW IV: 120–140, 170, 182. See also § 29 of the Würzburg System from 1804 (SW VI: 179). On the problem of the conception of absolute identity itself, see Bernhard Rang, *Identität und Indifferenz. Eine Untersuchung zu Schellings Identitätsphilosophie* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2000), 141–151. Rang, however, does not find any noticeable difference in the conception of absolute identity between 1801 and 1806. For a much more systematic problematization of the relationship between identity and difference, especially for the selected period, see, above all, Philipp Schwab, "'Uebergang von Identität zu Differenz': Die Bestimmung des Systemprinzips in den Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen vor dem Hintergrund von Schellings Denkentwicklung seit 1801," in *System, Natur und Anthropologie: Zum 200. Jubiläum von Schellings Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*, ed. Lore Hühn and Philipp Schwab (Freiburg/Munich: Karl Alber, 2014), 35–70. Schwab clearly emphasizes the importance of difference and the dynamization of Schelling's conception of identity, but he pays little to no attention to Schelling's concept of love. See also Philipp Schwab, "A = A: Zur identitätslogischen Systemgrundlegung bei Fichte, Schelling und Hegel," in *Internationales Jahrbuch des Deutschen Idealismus 12* (2017), 261–289.

[11] F.W.J. Schelling, *Bruno, or On the Natural and the Divine Principle of Things (1802)*, ed. and trans. Michael G. Vater (Albany: SUNY Press, 1984), 139. For the multilayered exchange of blows within German Idealism, and its philosophical-historical and systematic significance for Schelling's conception of identity, see again Philipp Schwab, "'Uebergang von Identität zu Differenz'"; Philipp Schwab, "A = A: Zur identitätslogischen Systemgrundlegung bei Fichte, Schelling und Hegel." On the significance of the engagement with the *Timaeus* for Schelling's philosophy of identity, and thus on the "tradition" in Schelling's work of thinking identity as an organic concept, see, above all, Bruce Matthews, *Schelling's Organic Form of Philosophy: Life as the Schema of Freedom* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2011) and Manfred Frank, *Reduplikative Identität: Der Schlüssel zu Schellings reifer Philosophie*, *Schellingiana* 28 (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2018).

difference. Passages such as the following from the *Further Presentations* of 1802, which still define the Absolute as "pure and unclouded [*ungetrübte*] identity" (SW IV: 374), and as entailing "the *absolute* exclusion of *all* difference from its essence" (SW IV: 375),[12] should thus be striking for any reader of the Freedom Essay (1809), since *difference* becomes therein not marginal, but rather constitutive of the determination of the Absolute itself. And even in *Philosophy and Religion* (1804)—considered by Schelling himself as the forerunner to the Freedom Essay[13]—where undoubtedly everything is already quite different, far more tense and indeed quite anticipatory, this definition remains predominant: even freedom's significance, radicalized by the theorem of the falling-away (*Abfall)*, is still relatively far from *challenging* the understanding of the *processuality* of absolute freedom *itself* and hence of the ultimate definition of the Absolute *as* indifference. Although finitude is indicated as its "own author,"[14] the will to this authorship as the will of the counter-Absolute (*Gegen-Absolutes*) to seize itself in its independence still has no place at all in the system. The question of how derived absoluteness *and* immanence of the creature—and thus of the *relation* itself between God and the World[15]—are to be conceived, and which will become the focus of the Freedom Essay under the heading of pantheism, remains here still unresolved.

It is this predominant notion of the Absolute that Tilliette strikingly calls a "clear, pure, *uncontaminated* indifference"[16] that I wanted to highlight as a crucial contrast and the breaking point through which we must understand the universally recognized crisis,[17] but above all, the *transformation* of Schelling's philosophy of identity: a crisis that makes the significance and radiance of love in Schelling's work particularly visible.

Schelling's model of indifference can explain formal, ideal difference with respect to a formalistic sequence of stages. However, the question of *why there is something at all rather than nothing*, a question that accompanied Schelling throughout his life, the origin of real difference, and of the world we live in,

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12 F.W.J. Schelling, *Fernere Darstellungen aus dem System der Philosophie* (SW IV: 333–510). Emphasis by the author.

13 See SW VII: 334. For a general analysis of Schelling's self-interpretation, see Jean-François Marquet, *Liberté et Existence*, 393; Xavier Tilliette, *Schelling. Une philosophie en devenir. Tome 1: Le système vivant, 1794–1821* (Paris: Vrin, 1970), 476–479.

14 Tilliette, *Schelling, Tome 1: Le système vivant*, 494.

15 Over the course of the present article, it will hopefully become clear to what extent Schelling's reference to the Platonic motif of the divine freedom from envy (see SW VI: 39), as well as Schelling's Spinozist affirmation of God's infinite self-love—to which he turns at the end of the 1804 treatise (see SW VI: 62)—are incongruent with his understanding of love in the Freedom Essay.

16 Xavier Tilliette, *Schelling, Tome 1: Le système vivant,* 520.

17 For an overview of this crisis and its key moments, see Tilliette, *Schelling, Tome 1: Le système vivant*; in particular, on the aporia of the finite, see 313, 475–481. See also Jean-François Marquet, *Liberté et Existence*, 207–310, 363.

may only be given formally, if it is given at all. In other words, the "riddle of the world" (SW I: 310)[18]—one could formulate somewhat strikingly—is not *solved* by the classical philosophy of identity, but is rather *sharpened* to the point that, as Wittgenstein put it, what is mystical is not how the world is, but *that* it is.[19] Schelling's classical philosophy of identity ultimately fails to achieve what his *Bruno* summarizes: the "genuine and deepest secret" (SW IV: 328)[20] would not only lie in showing the unity point of opposites but in *developing* from itself its opposite, a diversity, and in explaining true becoming out of the Absolute itself. In other words, Schelling does not show how *absolute identity*—as the system's foundational principle—unfolds a development from itself, and could explain real beginning, and whence and *why* there is more than formal difference.

It thus seems quite distorted when the Stuttgart-Schelling says that he has "always made it clear" (SW VII: 445) that the absolute principle of his system would not be "a mere identity but the identity of unity and oppositionality" (SW VII: 445),[21] and when he presents a monism and dualism of the absolute principle, but places this, like the 1810 *Stuttgart Seminars* in general, in continuity with earlier endeavors of his philosophy of identity, all the while speaking explicitly of a *qualitative* difference and of identity and duality *itself* as the last, no longer resolvable opposition.[22]

One year after the Freedom Essay, a notion of identity is at the center of Schelling's explicitly new attempt at a system—a notion of identity that not only acknowledges difference but can no longer be conceived without it. This sharpening of the system criteria in 1810, I argue, must not be understood "somehow" through Schelling's notion of love; rather, it quite simply pertains to no other concept in his philosophy so precisely and stands in direct systematic continuity with the highest point of his investigations in 1809.[23]

However, before Schelling's Freedom Essay links the *secret*—or mystery—*of love* (*Geheimnis der Liebe*) inseparably with the unground (*Ungrund*)—and thereby explicitly with the question of the *foundation* of the system itself—the dynamization of his understanding of identity is already expressed within love: In the *Statement* of 1806, a text wherein we could find passages that could indicate its descending from a much later period of Schellingian work (as well as passages that prove that it could not have done so), Schelling still defends

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[18] F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism,* in *The Unconditional in Human Knowledge*, 173/74.

[19] See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969), 6.44.

[20] F.W.J. Schelling, *Bruno*, 222.

[21] F.W.J. Schelling, *Stuttgart Seminars*, in *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory: Three Essays by F. W. J. Schelling*, ed. and trans. Thomas Pfau (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 225.

[22] See SW VII: 445. Especially for the role of love, see also SW VII: 453.

[23] See SW VII: 406.

an *identity without difference and opposition* as the well-known "indifference of essence and form" (SW VII: 54).[24] However, in 1806 it is specified that this indifference would "not yet contain" (SW VII: 54)[25] opposition, but that opposition would only come with plurality, to which we could only come "through the necessary result of self-revelation," which revelation is, as Schelling states, "itself being," and which could not happen in the revealing Being nor the transition to something entirely other, i.e., "when it is not actually the living bond between itself and another" (SW VII: 54).[26]

Whereas the *Statement* initially had mocked Fichte's elevation of love as an unsuccessful attempt to escape a philosophy of reflection,[27] Schelling himself presents an *affirmative* understanding of love that contrasts with the pure indifference of the previous years and, in the Freedom Essay, already designates the *living* aspect of identity that cannot be captured by a negative philosophy of reflection:[28] Understood as the unification of the One with the many, the *eternal bond* has become Schelling's explanation of real opposition—and love the synonym of divine identity. This is also evident in the *Aphorisms,* often taken to be the first occurrence of the motif of the *secret of love,* to which Schelling explicitly refers three years later:

> This is the secret of eternal love, that which wants to be absolute for itself does not consider it as theft to be it for itself, but is only in and with the others. If each were not a whole, but only part of the whole, then there would be no love: but there is love because each is a whole and yet is not, and cannot be without the other. (SW VII: 174)[29]

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[24] F.W.J. Schelling, *Statement on the True Relationship of the Philosophy of Nature to the Revised Fichtean Doctrine: An Elucidation of the Former, 1806*, trans. with an introduction and notes by Dale E. Snow (Albany: SUNY Press, 2018), 49.

[25] F.W.J. Schelling, *Statement on the True Relationship of the Philosophy of Nature to the Revised Fichtean Doctrine*, 49.

[26] F.W.J. Schelling, *Statement on the True Relationship of the Philosophy of Nature to the Revised Fichtean Doctrine*, 50.

[27] See in particular SW VII: 26 (F.W.J. Schelling, *Statement on the True Relationship of the Philosophy of Nature to the Revised Fichtean Doctrine*, 25).

[28] See in particular SW VII: 25–27, 65–79 (F.W.J. Schelling, *Statement on the True Relationship of the Philosophy of Nature to the Revised Fichtean Doctrine*, 24–26, 58–70).

[29] F.W.J. Schelling, *Aphorismen zur Einleitung in die Naturphilosophie* (SW VII: 140–189). See also aphorism 162 (SW VII: 174). For Schelling's explicit reference to the *Aphorisms* in the Freedom Essay, see SW VII: 408. The first occurrence of the *secret of love* in Schelling's work, as far as I am aware, is in 1804 in the Würzburg system (see SW VI: 407), in connection with the difference of sexes as the highest expression of absolute identity in nature. Here, however, this secret is of *secondary significance*, whereas it accompanies the dynamization up to the Freedom Essay, through which it first, as the present article argues, acquires *systematic* relevance.

I am recalling this to underline two things: First, that there is a gradual *abandonment of indifference* that goes hand in hand with the growing significance of love in Schelling's work, representing a major revision of Schelling's understanding of identity in 1806[30] and marking the background for the peculiar tension whereby *Schelling surpasses his concept of identity through his concept of identity.*[31] And second, that this is, however, still far from amounting to a full restructuring of *the systematic approach itself*. So even if a few things in Schelling cannot, in retrospect, be traced back to anticipations already present in his earlier works, I argue that while love, as sketched above, appears before 1809 as a synonym for divine identity and for the mystery of existence (and is, admittedly, never far from German Idealism's triune speculations), thus designating the *living* aspect of divine identity, it is only in the Freedom Essay that love becomes the *systematic* point of readjustment and transformation in Schelling's philosophy.

In what follows, I will focus on the significance of love in terms of the theory of principles and the logic of identity, in order to indicate how the secret of love—in being placed at the very heart of Schelling's system in 1809—confronts precisely those moments that have been the *aporias* of the philosophy of identity, and thereby renders *processuality*, *relationality*, and *personal existence* the new protagonists of Schellingian thinking.

The *motility of love* is far more than a marginal ornament—neither in the Freedom Essay nor in Schellingian thinking—but, on the contrary, becomes the very synonym of eternal freedom and divine life, the epitome of a "new," autogenetic Absolute, in 1809. It is at this point that love, for the first time in Schelling's work, becomes a theogonic and cosmogonic force, while also defining the genome of human freedom, speculatively marking its origin and thereby depicting the approach to the human being's capacity (*Vermögen*) for good and evil.

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[30] Schelling appends the *Treatise on the Relationship of the Real and the Ideal in Nature* to the second edition of the *Worldsoul* (1806). Here, as in the *Statement*, the bond (*Band*) is explicitly referred to as love, which underlines two things. First, although the bond is anything but a new figure for Schellingian thought (to whose introduction and importance Schelling, however, explicitly refers in the short preface to the second edition), love has gained the significance sketched above. Second, regarding the relationship between the Absolute and the world, this significance is still more oriented toward the classical motif of infinite self-affirmation and closer to Spinoza's *amor dei intellectualis* (see SW II: 362), especially with respect to the problem of finitude and real difference (see SW II: 362). For a significant difference in the understanding of love—namely, in contrast to the Freedom Essay—see also SW II: 376.

[31] See Jean-François Marquet, *Liberté et Existence*, 363.

The Motility of Love

In the above, I focused on the dynamization of Schelling's absolute identity up to the *overture* and the underlying *framework*—still the logic of absolute identity—of the Freedom Essay, to show how, when Schelling here decisively turns against an understanding of identity as "seamless sameness (*Einerleiheit*)" (SW VII: 345),[32] this can be grasped precisely as a pointed engagement both with external criticism[33] *and* with the *internal crisis* of his philosophy of identity.

In the course of this rejection of *seamless sameness*, Schelling here, at the very beginning of the Freedom Essay*,* immediately returns to the determination of the *copula* and the *bond* from 1806—and thus, without explicitly mentioning it, to the determination of absolute identity *as love.*

The misinterpretation of pantheism, he argues, would lie "in the general misunderstanding of the law of identity or the meaning of the copula in judgment" (SW VII: 341).[34] Identity would not express a unity, "which, turning itself in the circle of seamless sameness, would not be progressive and, thus, insensate or lifeless," but must *itself* be understood as the "immediately creative" (SW VII: 345)[35]—something that, in being identical to itself, *immediately* creates. This, however, has always been the demand placed on the one absolute principle, on the Absolute itself, and thus on the construction of an absolute system of philosophy—a demand that is fulfilled systematically for the first time in the Freedom Essay through love; within a creation-theological framework, and nonetheless in terms of the logic of identity.

Schelling's concrete form of this *immediately creative unity* is, as is well known, the determination of (primarily the divine) essence (*Wesen)* "in so far as it exists and being (*Wesen*)[,] in so far as it is merely the ground of existence," (SW VII:

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[32] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 17.

[33] On the catalytic significance of Hegel's famous polemic in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* for the Freedom Essay and the development of the Schellingian concept of identity, see again Philipp Schwab, "'Uebergang von Identität zu Differenz,'" 37–52. See also Philipp Schwab, "Von der Negativität zum Ungrund: Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes und Schellings Freiheitsschrift," in *Systembegriffe um 1800–1809: System in Bewegung*, ed. Christian Danz, Jürgen Stolzenberg, and Violetta Waibel (Hamburg: Meiner, 2018), 131–157.

[34] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom,* 13.

[35] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 17. Regarding Schelling's so-called middle and late philosophy, one could, albeit very schematically, say that what will change in the following years is only the "immediacy" of this *creation*—and thus Schelling's understanding of the original divine deed—not the fact that Schelling will consistently define the essence of this free act as love. In 1809, however, creation is both necessary *and* free (in a very particular sense, see SW VII: 397). Precisely the *immediate* character of creation thus marks a contrast, i.e., a shift still to come. In emphasizing that God had no need for creation in any sense (to become himself, to become conscious, etc.)—and in thus abandoning the theogonic orientation of the middle philosophy—I see a deepening of Schelling's notion of divine love in the years that follow.

357)[36] about which so much could be and has been said that I refer only to what sharpens the sketched contrast and thus focuses on the considered transformation: By this *ground in God*, difference is now clearly named as *divine difference* and the question about a last duality, as well as the transition from identity to difference, addresses the essence of God or, in the more identity-logical language, the *Absolute* itself. Whereas difference had been an unsolved difficulty of the system of absolute identity in earlier years, now it *intensifies* the questions that underpin the entire Freedom Essay: *how real* difference and yet identity; *how* dependence *and* independence of the creature (are possible); and *how* two equally primordial principles—how dualism *and yet* a monism of the principle[37]—can be asserted in such a way that this principle is now explicitly supposed to be the foundation of a *system of freedom*.

Schelling's answer, as I will try to illuminate in what follows, seems as simple as it is revolutionary: among all the divine attributes that thinking—all the more an absolute philosophy of absolute principles—had and has to offer, it is only *love* that is the actual, and philosophical, guarantee of our freedom. Only love can guarantee a "pantheism" that is no fatalism; and only love enables a dynamic conception of *absolute identity*.

While defining God as love seems to be Schelling's final major systematic tie to Platonic-Christian tradition (*which is indeed the case*), we should not forget that this transformation within the conception of Schelling's absolute identity is a fundamentally philosophical one. Schelling situates and *grounds* a complete phenomenology of love in the divine essence, understanding love from here on as the multilayered processuality of freedom and life. In doing so, he makes not only life the schema of freedom,[38] but also personal identity and existence the "schema" of the life of the spirit. It is only in 1809 that love becomes synonymous with freedom and genuine existence—to an extent that it shapes an understanding of *emancipation* that we will encounter again in the *Ages of the World*, just as love will serve as a hermeneutic key to Schelling's philosophy of history. Moreover, Christianity would not be surprised (nor would be psychoanalysis) at the idea that our capacity to love is deeply intertwined with our freedom, and vice versa.

One can, therefore, only critically wonder about the assumption that Schelling, as (most famously) Heidegger pointed out, would not only "fall back into a rigid tradition,"[39] but that Schelling's notion of love would ultimately hide a well-disguised will to power that fails, even suppresses, the individual

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[36] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 27.
[37] See in particular SW VII: 354, 406.
[38] See Bruce Matthews, *Schelling's Organic Form of Philosophy*.
[39] Martin Heidegger, *Schelling: Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit (1809)*, 279.

and her freedom.[40] I only briefly bring up this deep misunderstanding of *Schellingian love*, because it seems plausible to me that it may be responsible for a reading of the Freedom Essay that not only misses a *genealogy* inherent to the notion of love up to 1809, but—to keep it short (and polemic)—is responsible for a misunderstanding of the rest of Schellingian philosophy still to come thereafter. Such is a misreading that, already with a focus only on the Freedom Essay, misses not only the diverse phenomenology of love, but the logical problem related to it that confronts nothing less than the theory of potencies itself as it was reformulated in 1809 through love. Longing (*Sehnsucht)*, as the willing of the *Grund*, is no less a will of love than "the will of love"; spirit no less a potency of love than is the *Ungrund*; evil no less a "revelation," *albeit an inverted one*, of the truth *that God is love* (or, if you wish, of the *positivity* of love). And even if evil attempts precisely to hijack and annihilate this positivity, love nevertheless remains constitutive of the fact that the "hunger of selfishness (*Selbstsucht)*" (SW VII: 380)[41] is intensified, not satisfied, in evil.

When thinking of *Schellingian love*, we must therefore overcome an often-suggested and far too simplistic opposition that assumes that Schelling's understanding of love is limited to thinking of "love" on the one hand and "what opposes it" on the other. Love (like every form of *systematic* unity of earlier works), for Schelling, is not a merely summarizing unity; even less is it a synonym for a redemption that would show human freedom as—somewhere between comical and tragic—an illusion in a divine masterplan, i.e., redemption that would come about without human participation.

Love is, rather, *constitutive* of the unity in its entirety, and conditions each of its parts from the very beginning; love unconditionally conditions, it *is* the indissoluble interweaving of questing, longing, and word-giving understanding; of *priority* and *superiority*; *subject* and *predicate*; *antecedens* and *consequens*; *ground* and *cause*; *contraction* and *expansion*; *Father* and *Son* (…) and constitutes as such the co-originality of the principles: a co-originality that designates, above all, a *logical* problem—one that arises for Schelling no less than for the Pythagoreans or for Plato.

Schelling himself furthermore (precisely by positioning himself somehow against the tradition)[42] does not tire of emphasizing that the divine essence, *understood as love*, does not exhaust itself in the understanding of communicative or pure love, as he generally emphasizes—and will still emphasize in any

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[40] See in particular Martin Heidegger, *Die Metaphysik des deutschen Idealismus: Zur erneuten Auslegung von Schelling: Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit und die damit zusammenhängenden Gegenstände (1809)*, ed. Günter Seubold (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1991), 101, 121, 128.

[41] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 55.

[42] See F.W.J. Schelling, *The Ages of the World: Book One – the Past (Original Version, 1811) plus Supplementary Fragments (1811–1813)*, 77 (WA: 19).

potency-theoretical approach in subsequent years—the respective inability of the principles or forces to create something by themselves.[43] Therefore, their opposition must be *first of all* understood as a *mutually constitutive relationality*, an *indissoluble togetherness*, of which we can only ask wherein it grounds: Since the Freedom Essay thinks divine spirit as a triple-structured unity in which the principles and their relation—as the predominance of the universal principle in God—are founded, the famous passage of the 1809 unground (*Ungrund*) is thus to be understood (which should surprise us neither regarding the Freedom Essay nor concerning Schelling's later speculative figures of *Geist*) as the question of the origin of spirit and freedom.

> For even the spirit is not yet the highest thing; it is but spirit or the breath of love. Yet love is the highest. It is what was there [*was da war*], then, *before* the ground and *before* that which exists (as separate), but was not yet *as* love [*noch nicht war als Liebe*], rather—how should we describe [*bezeichnen*] it?— (SW VII: 405/6)[44]

That this unground (*Ungrund*) is so impossible to predicate that only predicatelessness can be spoken of it should, however, not obscure the fact that Schelling actually does not abandon the word,[45] but should on the contrary let us recognize that *love* is the only word that Schelling finds, and does not find—discards and retakes—at this highest point of his Freedom Essay, and thus at the foundation of his system. What Schelling presents as the philosophical interpretation of the Prologue of St. John (and Genesis), thinking love as the *essence of the divine spirit* and as the *motive* for creation,[46] is thereby drawing on his earlier philosophy of identity:

> But the non-ground [*Ungrund*] divides itself into the two exactly equally eternal beginnings, *only for that* the two, which could not exist simultaneously or be one in it as the non-ground, become one through love, that is, it divides itself only so that there *may be life and love and personal existence*. For love is neither in *indifference* nor where opposites are linked which require linkage for [their] Being, but rather (to repeat a phrase which has already been said) this is the secret of love, that it

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[43] See SW VII: 360. See also SW VII: 438. Cf. F.W.J. Schelling, *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung*, 45.

[44] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 69. Modification and emphasis by the author.

[45] See Martin Heidegger, *Schelling: Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit (1809),* 222.

[46] See SW VII: 361. F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 30: "(…) impelled [*bewogen*] by the love that it [the divine spirit] itself is."

> links such things of which each could be for itself, yet does not and cannot be without the other. (SW VII: 408)[47]

Both quotations, I argue, contain the sketched transformation of the philosophy of identity in a nutshell. In this regard, they most clearly foreshadow the positive philosophy. It is not only that Schelling, even linguistically, identifies philosophy's "innermost centerpoint" (SW VII: 333)[48]—which had accompanied him from his *Timaeus* commentary onward (*the necessary and the divine cause*)—with the *secret of love*. Rather, this opposition finds its final point—its actual origin—in love—and thereby, I argue, at the very center of the reorganization of Schellingian philosophy and his doctrine of potencies.

Recalling the *Presentation of My System of Philosophy*, it is now *literally* love that has replaced reason, and that stands at the highest point of his philosophical system. What in 1809 thus undoubtedly recalls Schelling's earlier determination of *indifference*, has now, therein, obviously undergone a decisive rearticulation: Indifference is not only no longer accessible through intellectual intuition, but is withdrawn from reason in a far more extensive sense: The Schelling of 1809 is still far from a method of positive philosophy, yet not too far from *enacting* it.[49] When the highest principle is withdrawn from reason, it is because it is not reason that makes it over the "abyss of infinity" (SW VII: 174),[50] but *love*. When at this highest point of the Freedom Essay, love *refutes* and *replaces* a system of absolute reason, it is because truth is not (only) a question of reason, but of existence: a fact that is undoubtedly not only "somehow" reflected in human freedom, but which *is* the impossibility of its indifference.

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[47] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom,* 70. Translation slightly modified and emphasized by the author. The German precisely does not say "exist" (as translated by Love and Schmidt) but *sein könnte* and *doch nicht ist* and *nicht sein kann*. One rarely pays attention to the simple fact that the formulation of the *secret of love* is itself potency-doctrinal, and therein—i.e., in Schelling's understanding of love in 1809—we find the most significant foreshadowing "prototype" for Schelling's subsequent work. I argue that already the *secret of love*, as presented in the Freedom Essay, contains in substance what Schelling will later elaborate as *Seinkönnen*, *Seinmüssen*, and *Seinsollen*, and is, not only in this regard, to be seen as the germ cell of all later figurations of the *doctrine of potencies* whose actual "content"—to formulate it as strongly as possible—is love. Despite the shifts of emphasis still to come, which the present article sets aside, it can nonetheless be stated that what remains common to all of Schelling's potency-theoretical approaches is that it is always *love* that addresses the dynamics of freedom and the processuality of consciousness.

[48] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 4.

[49] On this purpose, see Sean J. McGrath, *The Philosophical Foundations of the Late Schelling*, 152. However, there is, I would argue, a certain need to emphasize that the "realization" that love is the "meaning of being" belongs both at the end of negative philosophy and at the beginning of the project of positive philosophy.

[50] F.W.J. Schelling, *Aphorismen zur Einleitung in die Naturphilosophie* (SW VII: 140–189), see in general aphorism number 159.

The newly accentuated, paradoxical formulation cited above (*it is love but is not love*), which indicates *and* refutes identity, abandons the classical philosophy of identity in a few words and carries in concentrated form the explicit rejection of the equation of indifference and divine identity: a rejection that *must lie in love itself*. It is love that establishes a new rapport between indifference and identity, that only with 1809 becomes so decisive for Schelling's subsequent projects: Because—and I argue that we should hear this explicitly against the background of the classical philosophy of identity—love cannot be realized in indifference—because *love can only be love* insofar as it binds what is different and free, it is fitting to speak of "one magic stroke" (SW VII: 387),[51] which is the essence and effect of love and marks the Freedom Essay's much-circled boundary, i.e., the paradoxical confluence *and* separation of indifference and identity: "*noch nicht war als Liebe* [not yet *as* love]." This *as* (*als*)—the little word, as Marquet states, that bears the whole foundation of Schelling's philosophy,[52] the "critical breaking point" (*Sollbruchstelle*)[53] of the earlier notion of Schellingian identity, how Frank puts it—releases the whole *in-between*—the Schellingian *metaxý*—in which revelation takes place, and which is our life.

This autogenesis, that is a (self-)becoming of love, this *ought to be of love,* implies, strictly speaking, from the outset, the abandonment of indifference as a divergence into the two equally eternal beginnings, and still marks love as an all-transcending, unprethinkable reality: Only because love "was there,"[54] only because the unground (*Ungrund*) is also to be understood through love and love cannot yet *exist* in indifference, love itself is to be seen as the *movement-releasing* principle and the break with indifference. It is a break that, in the years that follow the Freedom Essay, undoubtedly becomes itself the object of Schelling's thinking. Indifference is not simply discarded, for it frames love as an all-encompassing reality and leaves its traces in remaining constitutive of willing, longing, and loving. Yet, Schelling himself, in 1809, breaks with what has been the longtime-defended fundament to his "absolute System of Identity" (SW IV: 113).[55] Indifference is no longer the final and sufficient vanishing point of reason, but the *eternally abandoned* and the *eternally future.*

One is tempted to sum up one of Schelling's most striking renewals of this period by simply saying *that love needs time.* If we understand in what sense we would never say that a newborn truly loves his mother (without, of course, claiming that this relation has nothing to do with love) or why in every longing for unity there are merging-fantasies, "paradisiacal traces" of Adam and Eve; while we would also not say that they truly love each other (nor that they ever

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[51] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 52.
[52] See Jean-François Marquet, *Liberté et Existence*, 404.
[53] Manfred Frank, *Reduplikative Identität*, 143.
[54] See SW VII: 405–406. I retain my modification of the translation above.
[55] F.W.J. Schelling, *Presentation of My System of Philosophy*, 145. Translation slightly modified.

could love God), so then do we not only understand Schelling's profound and anti-canonical notion of *perfection* in 1809,[56] but so too would we grasp a driving concern of Schellingian thought from 1809 onward and a major insight into the circulated rejection of indifference—and thus of what had once been the absolute and *sufficient* principle of Schelling's system.

Although Schelling will later be much more decisive concerning the idea that God did not need the world in order to recognize, to accomplish, or "to be himself," one cannot deny that love, in 1809, has a *transformative power* precisely in terms of the theory of absolute principles—particularly because love not only hints and refers to that which lies beyond logic, but because it does so based on the logic of Schelling's classical philosophy of identity. Juggling with the equations of the philosophy of identity—even of a most "geometric order"—only love is that something that, only by *being itself*, brings something into the equation that is not itself, if love is precisely to love and to *bind* what is different and free. In other words, love is the only *One* that demands—other than the absolute principle of the *Presentation*—by itself a difference that cannot be merely formal or quantitative, and *nevertheless* can be thought of as rising from one first principle: a thought that works without any confession, especially in the wake of absolute philosophy of principles, and that is, moreover, not positive philosophy,[57] but the negative side of the Schellingian love story.

The *abandonment of indifference* becomes, quite in a double sense, Schelling's breakthrough to a philosophy of time and historicity and has now brought a "new" Absolute that stands with one foot in the identity system of the previous and with the other in the development of the following years: an autogenic Absolute, whose core is the "all-unification" of love that is no less the systematic thought of the *Stuttgart Seminars* than it will remain a motif for Schelling's monotheism-treatise. A leitmotif that renders the *motility of love* no less the key concept to the theogony from the Freedom Essay and the *Ages of the World* than it will still be to the Philosophy of Revelation.

Despite all the shifts and deepening to come, the one insight pervades the Freedom Essay that there lies something in love, like in freedom, which makes us understand why the classical system of identity could not explain to us the real world, and before what background love in 1809 becomes a *philosophical* solution to the *aporias* of classical philosophy of identity. A "solution" that contains the *most transformative power* for Schelling's further thinking and bequeaths to his itinerary a synonymy between freedom and love that allows us to speak of freedom as the letter and of love as the spirit of Schellingian freedom—and thinking. A synonymy that, as argued in what follows, pervades

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[56] See in particular SW VII: 403.

[57] See Sean J. McGrath, *The Philosophical Foundations of the Late Schelling*, 152.

and animates the entire Freedom Essay, and in which divine and human personhood become *mutual* interpretative keys to each other: *Love* in 1809 not only indicates the origin of human freedom and the ultimate justification of a system of freedom, but provides the framework for understanding the *essence* and *reality* of human freedom and self-becoming.

Human Love as the *Hermeneuticum* of the Freedom Essay's Metaphysics of Love

In Schelling's 1809 defense of God as life and a personal being lies, as is well known, a criticism of negative philosophy that serves no less as his fundamental reproach to Spinoza than as the basis for his later criticism of his early system. Amid the aporias of the philosophy of identity and the erstwhile *gap* located in Schelling's definition of the very essence of the Absolute—and thus in his understanding of absolute identity itself—the sketched transformation has *systematically* caught up with precisely those moments of *processuality*, *relationality*, and *existence*. It may seem like a sleight of hand to attribute to Schelling an understanding of love according to which Christianity only becomes philosophically more profoundly relevant to him from 1809 onward against the background of this transformation, rather than motivating the transformation in the first place. It may likewise seem acrobatic to claim that it is thus not Christianity's template of personhood, but that *freedom and love* are moved to the center of Schelling's philosophy in 1809 in such a way that Schelling sought to understand Christianity from there as a distinct and exceptional religion (even if not the highest or the ultimate one).

In any case, it becomes clear how this shift, i.e., to speak decidedly of *personal* identity and self-becoming, transforms an entire language and cosmos of the philosophy of nature and identity into one of self-becoming and personhood, which undoubtedly becomes the new axis of Schellingian philosophy, which reorganizes itself around 1809. It is this "personalization" of absolute identity that makes Schelling speak of egoism as the "material (*Stoff*) from which everything is being created" (SW VII: 439),[58] carries gravity and light toward a new totality of thinking, and allows the potencies already present in the commentary on the *Timaeus* (which is not suspected of proclaiming a philosophy of revelation), as well as a terminology of a text like the *Presentation* to be approached by a language and a *metaphysics of love*.

That the systematic and hermeneutic significance of love for Schelling's philosophy remains, in general and even concerning the Freedom Essay, highly underrated in Schelling scholarship, could also be because of a certain hype

[58] F.W.J. Schelling, *Stuttgart Seminars*, 211.

around the "metaphysics of evil"[59] that somehow concealed that evil also belongs in the dynamics and the phenomenology of love. In other words, Schelling's "metaphysics of love" is not solely a "second pole"[60] of the Freedom Essay. A meaningful addition to the *metaphysics of love* of 1809 would rather be that it is *only* Schelling's *first* metaphysical and systematic foundation of a philosophy of love.

With the previously mentioned personalization comes a general existential reemphasis of the concept of identity, which reveals an entanglement of anthropological and epistemological inquiry—fundamentally constitutive of Schelling's subsequent works—and undoubtedly forms the framework of the Freedom Essay: If the *law of identity* is the highest to which, in a pointed formulation (*and in 1809*), even God must submit himself, then it becomes clear from here how the Freedom Essay delineates human self-becoming and the enactment of her freedom *between* a sort of perverted Self-love, selfishness (*Selbstsucht)*, and self-abandonment. That everything strives to be, to become *one* with itself and to connect to the World and Others, this *longing for Unity*—a widely recognized synonym for love in mysticism as well as in Hölderlin or every second pop song—is not less *active* in "Good" than it is in "Evil." Yet, what is tried in any evil, as a reactualization of the *Grund*, Schelling suggests to us, is the *suspension of relation*, is the attempt to get behind *relationality* as such, to place itself at "the place where God should be" (SW VII: 390).[61]

In 1809, love is the hermeneutic background both for understanding the "boundness" (*Gebundenheit*) that Schelling associates with the word "religiosity" (SW VII: 392)[62] and for understanding the general *un-boundness*, the "severability" (SW VII: 364)[63] that appears not only as the *possibility* of evil but is actualized in every concrete evil. Good and evil, for Schelling, even semantically, converge in the notion of the *bond* that love is.[64]

On Schelling's account, spirit, as such, is to be understood fundamentally as relation. If we cling to a purely oppositional reading of Schelling's notion of love, we miss how love—beyond, evidently, describing the concrete content of actions *and* their maxims—fundamentally designates this relationality itself and the essence of human freedom. For Schelling, at least, love also expresses

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[59] See Martin Heidegger, *Schelling: Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit (1809)*, 168–172, 181–192.
[60] See Courtine's criticism of Heidegger's Schelling interpretation. Jean-François Courtine, "Schelling: Das System der Freiheit. Von der absoluten Freiheit zur Metaphysik des Bösen," in *Schellings Philosophie der Freiheit*, ed. Diogo Ferrer and Theresa Pedro (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2012), 42.
[61] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 54.
[62] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 56. Love and Schmidt translate *Gebundenheit* as "relation."
[63] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 33.
[64] No less linked to each other in the text from which Schelling originally took his "*desmology."* See Plato, *Timaeus*, 41a–b.

the general condition that the human spirit originates in the divine one and remains rooted in it. The relation to God grounds both self-relation and relation to others, and all these relations are therefore mirrors of one another.[65] God is relation and "nothing but relation, pure relation [*nichts als Beziehung und lauter Beziehung*]" (SW X: 260),[66] as Schelling will formulate, and the Freedom Essay articulates this relation with respect to the human spirit, as the basis for relating toward ourselves, toward the world, toward nature, and toward others, in ways that we can call evil or good, or likewise, destructive or loving.

The Freedom Essay shows—in Kierkegaardian resonance[67]—how freedom's enactment in evil or good is fundamentally described through an *inescapable belonging* in either case. This inescapability could be misunderstood as a teleological one, but it simply means that our freedom does not extend to choosing whether we want to be human or a cockatoo. Hence, love denotes a belonging that, on the one hand, appears in evil's attempt to break away from relationality, i.e., is inscribed in the tearing loose that inhabits every concrete evil, and, on the other hand, fundamentally demands its positive *affirmation,* which nevertheless remains a personal decision that engenders every concrete good.

This is why "the spirit of love" designates both God's spirit—expressing the *indissoluble* relation of forces within God—and, explicitly, the human disposition of good.[68] Love—as the sense of being, as the epitome of identity—thus also names the highest *potency* of the spirit.

Love is systematically and hermeneutically constitutive of the (self-) destructive rebellion of evil—that is most precisely to be named and understood as *perverted love*—as it is for the "true freedom [which] is in harmony with a holy necessity" (SW VII: 391),[69] i.e., the "highest resoluteness [*Entschiedenheit*] in favor of what is right without any choice" (SW VII: 392).[70] Schelling thus brings this human decisiveness into closest proximity to the divine deed of creation, which can be repeated only in freedom and can be proven only to those who love.

Before Schelling writes a single line on the *Johannine Church*—a unity of the human *community* that would indeed be the *time* and the *life* of the "spirit of love"—this *spirit of love*, in 1809, becomes synonymous with the *individual* actualization of human freedom, relevant to Schelling's ethics no less than to

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[65] See in particular SW VII: 365.

[66] F.W.J. Schelling, *Darstellung des philosophischen Empirismus* (SW X: 225–286).

[67] All the more by placing—above all other matters—the concept of love in the very heart of Schelling's Freedom Essay, one is tempted to read Kierkegaard's *The Sickness unto Death* as an existential-philosophical unfolding of the Schellingian potencies of self-becoming, precisely as presented in 1809.

[68] SW VII: 365. See also SW VII: 361, 377, 409.

[69] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 56.

[70] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 57.

his epistemology, naming the open space in creation and history, that is, the human will and consciousness.

Certainly, the Freedom Essay depicts God as the *victory of love* (decided in God), which is synonymous with the act of creation itself, yet not identical with that victory of love that would be the *fulfillment of creation* and would come without human complicity. The divine victory of love, which grounds creation and which Schelling will also address in the *Ages of the World*, is not the tyranny of love (*for no such thing exists*) but its possibility: "so that there may be life and love and personal existence" (SW VII: 408).[71] The Freedom Essay shows—as the project of the Philosophy of Mythology and Revelation will all the more suggest—that the *actual* "protagonist" of history is not (if it is permissible to separate this somewhat schematically and artificially) simply revelation, nor a mechanically unfolding history of consciousness, but the *relation* between the Divine and the Human: *the bond itself*. The fact that one part of a relation, even if it is God, has decided to love does not mean that this also applies to its counterpart or to the object of its love. Not even God can force love—a thought that is among the most beautiful in Schellingian philosophy and that shows the absurdity of the merely teleological, i.e., even totalitarian, reading of *Schellingian love*, since no other notion in Schelling *but love* shows how highly he values human freedom.

Already the Freedom Essay is carried by an understanding of love and freedom that sees the human being as responsible not "to break the word, touch the ground of creation, and profane the mystery" (SW VII: 391),[72] but, as Schelling puts it in the *Ages of the World*, to "keep alive the power of love" (WA: 218).[73] Whoever wants to read Christian bigotry or dogmatism into this should likewise take Socrates for an ideologically clouded Christian—when Socrates says that the one who makes egoism the principle of his life, who exploits and instrumentalizes others, *would not care about geometry*,[74] and thus mistakes himself as the *measure* of all things and does not know his *place on earth* in wanting to usurp the place where God should be. This *hubris*, which so essentially characterizes evil and that concerns the *philosophical* fall of man just as much as it does any degree of human self-exaltation, in all its well-known forms of perversion may indicate the extent to which love in 1809 becomes Schelling's *most intimate synonym* for existence as it constitutes true knowledge—which, as the one of good and evil, coincides with the emergence of our

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[71] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 70.
[72] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 55.
[73] F.W.J. Schelling, *The Ages of the World: Book One – the Past (original version, 1811) plus supplementary fragments (1811–1813)*, 200.
[74] See Plato, *Gorgias*, 508a.

consciousness and our freedom that is the possibility and the condition of (every) love.[75]

The *Stuttgart Seminars* as the First Draft of a System of Love

Addressing the Stuttgart system, for which the tension between *principle and life* is rightly noted,[76] I hope to have shown love's *systematic* relevance to an extent that it becomes clear how it belongs on both sides, i.e., how it informs both principle and life.

In 1810, it is still absolute identity—the cardinal determination of the Absolute and thus the foundation of his system—with which the *Stuttgart Seminars* begins no less than the *Presentation* once did. However, the definition of the absolute identity itself is now linked to a strong determination of a qualitative, *divine difference*, tied to the essence of the absolute principle, "that supports itself, a principle that consists in and through itself" (SW VII: 421),[77] and with which movement itself coincides. These criteria[78] and the *monistic-dualistic* conception of absolute identity, as presented in 1810, would not be comprehensible without Schelling's understanding of love, which finds itself in the heart of the new processuality and the reorganized totality of Schellingian thinking, and, apparently, still allows Schelling, at least in 1810, to underline the continuity with his earlier work.

The Stuttgart system occupies a peculiarly special position insofar as it is no less the *last shape* of his philosophy of identity than it is the *prototype* of what will still be the late Schelling's system: In a renewed recourse to the Pauline "All in All" (SW VII: 484),[79] love is explicitly naming the *world system* to be

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[75] Sean J. McGrath, *The Philosophical Foundations of the Late Schelling*, points out the supreme sense of the Freedom Essay's "transitive" interpretation of 1. John 4: 8: "God is the *antecedens*, love is the *consequens*. God loves. God divides Godself from being, decides to exist as God, creates the world as God's other, and lets it fall so that it might freely rise again, all for one superb purpose, which is the stroke of the divine genius: that love might be."

[76] See in particular: Philipp Schwab, "Uebergang von Identität zu Differenz," 52–67, especially 61. See also Sylvaine Gourdain, "Das Leben der Identität: Zur Wandlung des Systems in Schellings *Freiheitsschrift* und den *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*," in *System, Natur und Anthropologie: Zum 200. Jubiläum von Schellings Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*, ed. Lore Hühn and Philipp Schwab (Freiburg/Munich: Karl Alber, 2014), 81–101 and Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, "Die Theologie der *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*," in *System, Natur und Anthropologie: Zum 200. Jubiläum von Schellings Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*, ed. Lore Hühn and Philipp Schwab (Freiburg/Munich: Karl Alber, 2014), 159.

[77] F.W.J. Schelling, *Stuttgart Seminars*, 198.

[78] See in general SW VII: 421.

[79] F.W.J. Schelling, *Stuttgart Seminars*, 243; here translated as "in all actuality everything." For the explicit reference in the Freedom Essay, see SW VII: 408. For a deep insight into this

found, which is, though far from later approaches, the historic life of the trinity.[80] When the Freedom Essay had presented love as Schelling's answer to theodicy no less than, as sketched above, the key element for rethinking pantheism (*nota bene in 1809*) as a system of freedom, he now, in 1810, reemphasizes this affirmative concept of pantheism as an *All-Unity of Love*, which thus traces an arc not only from the Freedom Essay into the *system of times* that undergirds Schelling's project of the *Ages of the World* but also into the "Christian panentheism" that he will henceforth refine as the only possible free system of philosophy,[81] systematically developed in his monotheism-treatise.

The significance of the transformation of Schelling's conception of absolute identity—and the *system-architectural relevance of love* that accompanies it—is expressed in nothing less than the fact that love, in 1809 and then immediately and decisively taken up again in Stuttgart, becomes the *name* of Schelling's system. A name that, in my view, remains valid despite the versatility of the subsequent decades of his work. That some are still discussing the failure of Schelling's system—presumably many influenced by Heidegger's narrative[82] and by the comparison with Hegel's neighboring system, which is usually taken to be articulated in a more encompassing and exhaustive manner—is arguably misguided, given that a "system of love" is, *by definition and in various ways*, an unclosed system.[83] Not least in the fundamental sense that the human must inscribe itself into this system, into the divine life, and participate in the revelation of the absolute Existent as personality. However, the *spirit of love* is not only a complex synonym for life, for the future, and thus for an eschatological figure, but it is also, as noted above, a key term in Schellingian epistemology.

The Freedom Essay belongs so essentially to the "end" of a philosophical development, as well as to the *second beginning* in and with Schelling's philosophy, not only because love—through the outlined transformation—becomes the highest *object* of Schellingian metaphysics in 1809, but because it therein stands for a decisive *reformulation* of the system like no other concept, and contributes like no other notion—or rather like no other Schellingian *move* around 1809—to the recognition of the limits of philosophy and thus to the

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Pauline Pantheism in Schelling's philosophy from 1809 onward, see Sean J. McGrath, *The Philosophical Foundations of the Late Schelling*, 36–37, 64–67, 169–170, in particular 65.

[80] Already in the *On University Studies* (published in 1803), Schelling criticizes Lessing for not grasping the Trinity historically (see SW V: 294). To be clear on this point, the thesis is that Schelling *himself* will achieve this only through the sketched transformation of his philosophy of identity.

[81] See F.W.J. Schelling, *Der Monotheismus*, (SW XII: 3–131), and SW XII: 33.

[82] See in particular Martin Heidegger, *Schelling: Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit (1809)*, 279.

[83] See Sean J. McGrath, *The Philosophical Foundations of the Late Schelling*, 25, 156–158, who concisely clarifies this tension.

adjustment of the tasks and methods of his thought. This is inscribed immediately to the *Stuttgart Seminars*, since love is essential for the therein unfolded anthropology, i.e., for the theory of the potencies of the human spirit: A "pneumatology" that is, not only, but above all, a theory of cognition that––especially when we recognize the meaning of love in 1809 and love's potency-doctrinal significance that undergirds the whole Freedom Essay—brings nothing substantially new, but is rather the schematization of what is implicit in 1809.[84]

The Freedom Essay had not only presented the human likeness to God (*Ebenbildlichkeit*) as the ultimate foundation of his freedom and his *mediating* role—deepened in 1810 in terms of the history of salvation—but had also articulated a *critique* of the human spirit. This critique is reflected and unfolded in the 1810 theory of potencies and is essentially rooted in the recognition of the spirit's *corruptibility* and *corruption* that the Freedom Essay had outlined by presenting the human spirit not only as a *supernatural* principle but precisely as the *contra-natural* and *contra-divine*.[85]

The human's separation from (and thus its potential reconciliation with) nature and God—and with the human's own place as one who stands between both—is first imbued in the *Stuttgart Seminars*. This reconciliation for which we can hope in history, marks, in 1810, no less a pending *goal* and *form* of philosophy.

Schelling, already in 1809, presented evil not primarily as a moral-philosophical problem but as an *epistemological* one (even if this classification reflects our division of philosophy, not Schelling's). This entanglement can be understood as the fundamentally newly emerging question of the *true organon* of philosophy: "The nature (*Wesen*) of the soul, too, is love" (SW VII: 473),[86] it is said about the third, highest potency of the spirit, *the soul*, which alone—as the *Ages of the World* begins—has a participatory knowledge (*Mitwissenschaft*) of creation.[87]

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[84] Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, in "Die Theologie der *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*," 177, argues that "evil" in the *Stuttgart Seminars* would show "no relation to the doctrine of evil" of 1809. I argue that the opposite is the case, and this to an extent that there is not only no single statement about evil in one of the texts that we could not recognize in the other, but that the *Stuttgart Seminars* are a decisive answer to "evil in 1809," and therein a bridge, also on a methodological level, to the project of the *Ages of the World*.

[85] For the resumption of this point in 1810, see in particular SW VII: 468–469.

[86] F.W.J. Schelling, *Stuttgart Seminars*, 236. In this sense, see also *Clara* (SW IX: 1–110), SW IX: 19, 45–49. I will not give the numerous references for the *bond* in the *Stuttgart Seminars*, but I want to underline that this *third potency*, as the soul, is a synonym and an immediate resumption of what the Freedom Essay had developed as the "spirit of love."

[87] *Weltalter* (1811), 4. F.W.J. Schelling, *The Ages of the World: Book One – the Past (Original Version, 1811) Plus Supplementary Fragments (1811–1813)*, 57.

Love in 1809, in other words, becomes not only the highest *object* of Schelling's metaphysics but also its *shaping force* and *ethos*, contributing to Schelling's *reformulation* of the essence and task of philosophy. In "melting together (*verschmelzen*) the entire universe into one vast work (*Werk*) of love" (SW VII: 474),[88] Schelling ultimately formulates not simply the goal and content of the system inherent "in the divine understanding (*Verstand*)" (SW VII: 421),[89] but precisely philosophy's only possible system and the philosopher's task.[90]

I have attempted to outline to what extent this *work of love*, this "melting together"—a *system of love* that seems no less an oxymoron than the system of freedom—cannot be understood as *seamless sameness*. Rather, I have argued that Schelling, on the contrary, sets out toward the concrete and the singular and develops, in the sense of both the objective and the subjective genitive, a *philosophy of existence* that becomes a *philosophy of love*.

[88] F.W.J. Schelling, *Stuttgart Seminars*, 236. Translation slightly modified by the author. Pfau's translation renders "realign" as "verschmelzen"; it is a choice that excludes many associations that are linked with the German term and, I would argue, intended by Schelling.
[89] F.W.J. Schelling, *Stuttgart Seminars*, 197.
[90] See again F.W.J. Schelling, *Stuttgart Seminars*, 236 (SW VII: 474).

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The Subversion of German Idealism in Schelling's Revival of Augustine's Doctrine of Original Sin

Jan Kerkmann

This essay aims to develop a systematic comparison between Augustine's and Schelling's conceptions of the origin of evil.[1] The main similarity in the

[1] The question of the metaphysical or anthropological necessity of evil—beyond the possibility inherent in nature—continues to be a central and controversial point of reference in current research on the Freedom Essay. In his influential Schelling Lecture from 1936, Heidegger summarized Schelling's approach in the formula of a "metaphysics of evil" (*Metaphysik des Bösen*). Subsequently, in more recent research, Lore Hühn and Lisa Egloff in particular emphasize the inescapability of evil, which means that the intelligible deed as the main condition of human existence necessarily converges with the positing and realization of evil in every individual. As will be shown in this essay, it is indeed possible to highlight significant passages in the Freedom Essay that speak in favor of this reading. Cf. Lore Hühn,"Die intelligible Tat. Zu einer Gemeinsamkeit Schellings und Schopenhauers," in *Selbstbesinnung der philosophischen Moderne. Beiträge zur kritischen Hermeneutik ihrer Grundbegriffe*, ed. Christian Iber and Romano Pocai (Cuxhaven: Traude Junghans, 1998), 55–94. In her own monograph, Lisa Egloff interprets evil as the "realization of human freedom," so that the decision in favor of evil is synonymous with the exercise of genuine human freedom. See Lisa Egloff, *Das Böse als Vollzug menschlicher Freiheit. Die Neuausrichtung idealistischer Systemphilosophie in Schellings Freiheitsschrift* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2016). Thomas Buchheim has argued in his critical debate with Heidegger in favor of taking seriously the "and" in Schelling's definition of real freedom as the "capacity for good and for evil [*Vermögen zum Guten und zum Bösen*]" (SW VII: 354) and of granting man the primordial freedom to do good in equal measure. Buchheim's interpretation has significant anthropological consequences: If God continues to grant humans the capacity for good, it can no longer be said that humans are completely subject to original sin. Thus, against Schelling's (supposedly) monolithic determination of freedom toward the "execution of evil," it can be asked whether freedom is not completely cancelled if man, in the positing of his being, must always and can only choose evil. Moreover, if every human being is

intentions of both thinkers lies in the fact that the late Augustine and the author of the Freedom Essay recognize the positivity of evil, which they seek to reconcile with the omnipotence, all-goodness, and personality of God. While Augustine considers true human freedom—understood as the free capacity to choose between good and evil—forfeited for all human beings subsequent to the fall of Adam, Schelling regards this same capacity as the eternal, transcendental, and in this sense, indestructible principle of human individuality. In this way, he seems to have mastered the Augustinian challenge in the Freedom Essay. Augustine's position is generally challenging, even and especially for today's readers, because he considers all humans to be evil after Adam's fall into sin, so that there is no possibility that anyone can do good of their own accord.

Whereas according to Augustine, freedom is an endowment that God only conceded to Adam, at first glance, it looks as if Schelling rescues human freedom as an original self-beginning open to every individual.

In contrast to this favorable impression, I would like to show in this article that Schelling does not succeed, in the Freedom Essay, in leaving the doctrine of original sin behind him. I will argue that Schelling cannot get rid of Augustine's dark shadow. I want to demonstrate that Augustine haunts Schelling's vital and real concept of freedom (as a capacity for good and evil). This is especially true if one favors a strict interpretation of the intelligible deed. In this interpretation, man must choose evil in order to individuate himself—whereas, in a less rigid interpretation, it would be possible for each individual to decide once and for all to choose the good. The leading thesis of this article, therefore, is that the intelligible deed begins to hollow out human freedom introduced as self-determination when Schelling proclaims that "man apprehended himself from eternity in his individuality and selfishness, and all who are born are born with the dark principle of evil within" (SW VII: 388).[2]

The essay is divided into five sections. In the first section, a concise presentation of Augustine's doctrine of original sin is given, wherein, in

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inevitably evil in his or her origin, this does not necessarily lead to a tragic theory of human freedom but could conversely result in a trivialization of evil, insofar as people differ only slightly from one another within their overarching inclination toward evil. See Thomas Buchheim, "Metaphysische Notwendigkeit des Bösen. Über eine Zweideutigkeit in Heideggers Auslegung der Freiheitsschrift," in *Zeit und Freiheit. Schelling—Schopenhauer—Kierkegaard—Heidegger*, ed. Istvan Feher and Wilhelm G. Jacobs (Budapest: Ketef Bt, 1999), 183–192. In contrast to the predominant focus on evil, Markus Gabriel argues instead that Schelling was interested in rescuing free self-determination toward the good in the *Freedom Essay* and that he therefore primarily deals with Kant's theory of action. See Markus Gabriel, "Schellings Theorie des Guten," in *Freiheit nach Kant. Tradition, Rezeption*, *Transformation, Aktualität*, ed. Saša Josifović and Jörg Noller (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 236–250.

[2] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (Albany: SUNY, 2006), 53.

addition to the third book of *On Free Choice of the Will* (*De libero arbitrio*), a focus on the relevant texts concerning the doctrine of grace—advocated from 397 onwards—is warranted[3] Schelling's theory of the intelligible deed can then be considered in the second section. Following from this, the third section discusses the hermeneutical problems regarding the explainability and lifeworld manifestation of original sin and the intelligible deed. Augustine and Schelling agree, it is illuminated, in their respect for the epistemic status of their respective theorems, to the effect that both theorems—original sin and the intelligible deed—cannot be fully understood in their nature insofar as each describes a phenomenon understood to *precede* intratemporal realization—of the existence of man as such (Augustine) and of the individual (Schelling)—as that realization's very condition. In the fourth section, the philosophical core of these considerations is reached in raising the question of whether Schelling does not subtly legitimize the intelligible deed and the evil chosen in it as a means of the self-revelation of divinity. The latter consideration is undertaken within the framework of a systematic and structural comparison between the doctrine of original sin and the intelligible deed. The fifth and final section contains a brief summary of the results.

Augustine's Concept of Original Sin

Augustine defines original sin as a heredity transmitted through procreation and attached to the individual as a human being. Ontologically, Augustine underpins the notion of original sin with the theory of Traducianism, which can be characterized as Platonism with a biological dimension. According to this theory, all human beings share in the one soul substance of Adam, who forfeited free will and chose evil (turning away from God). In the third book

[3] On the origin, conception, and criticism of Augustine's doctrine of original sin, see Kurt Flasch, *Logik des Schreckens Augustinus von Hippo: De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum I 2* (Mainz: Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2012). On the development of Augustine's thought from early Manichaeism to Christian Platonism and to the late doctrine of grace, see Johann Kreuzer, *Augustinus zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius, 2013). With regard to the dogmatic dispute (a dispute in which the question of the relationship between divine grace and human free will plays a fundamental role) between Augustine, on the one hand, and the Celtic British theologian Pelagius (condemned as a heretic in 418) and his Italian successor Julian of Eclanum, on the other, see Andreas Urs Sommer, "Das Ende der antiken Anthropologie als Bewährungsfall kontextualistischer Philosophiegeschichtsschreibung: Julian von Eclanum und Augustin von Hippo," in *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 57, no. 1 (2005): 1–28. Pelagius accused Augustine of reviving his (Augustine's) earlier Manichaeism with the doctrine of original sin—deeming Augustine to have erected the evil actualized by Adam's fall to the status of an independent power. Moreover, according to Julian's criticism, Augustine taught a moral fatalism: because Augustine denied man the ability to free himself from entanglement in evil through his own efforts of will, the individual was helplessly under the disposal of divine fate and in this powerlessness could only hope that God would have mercy on him.

of *On Free Choice of the Will*, Augustine writes "that the person who knowingly does not act righteously loses the knowledge of what is right; and the person loses the capacity to do good who did not want to act righteously when he was able to do so."[4] By abusing his freedom, Adam has forgotten his capacity and knowledge of what it means to act virtuously and justly. Since all men sinned in Adam, they are all born with the negative characteristics of ignorance (*ignorantia*) and incapacity (*difficultas*), which they inherited from their forefather.

For Augustine, this also means that all subsequent human beings—unlike Adam, who was completely free at the beginning—cannot make an impartial choice between good and evil, but are predetermined to exist throughout their lives as separated from God—compelled by their sinful nature "to do not the good [they] want, but the evil [they] do not want is what [they] keep on doing."[5] As a consequence of original sin, God acts justly in condemning all men; and he testifies to his mercy by redeeming some men. In his dispute with Julian of Eclanum, Augustine even goes so far as to suggest that innocent infants are included in this: damned because their suffering indicates guilt incurred before birth. This illustrates that from 397 onward, Augustine conceives of the will to evil, which continues to operate in desire (*concupiscentia*) and arrogance (*superbia*), as an inevitable state that is inherent in all human beings as a consequence of the Fall. In opposition to what Schelling propounds in the Freedom Essay—as will be shown shortly—from Augustine's perspective, no individual can have an independent, free beginning. Because all human beings sinned in Adam, they collectively participate in his first guilt, through which the knowledge of the good was forfeited. Due to Adam's abuse of freedom, human nature in Augustine's view is incapable, at least at the beginning of individual life, of being permanently guided by a good, God-centered will.

In a reinforcement of the Pauline contrast between human law and divine grace, Augustine emphasizes that man cannot know who is condemned or redeemed because both punishment and reward are based on God's infallible and inscrutable decree. God is so omnipotent and omniscient that man, entangled in deception as a result of the Fall, cannot even discover whether he himself is good or evil by scrutinizing his own maxims and actions. It is obvious that this not only prevents man from understanding God, but also excludes him from a deeper understanding of himself. We can thus fully

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[4] Augustine, *On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings*, trans. Peter King (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 102.
[5] Rom. 7:19.

endorse Andreas Urs Sommer's judgment that Augustine marked the end of ancient anthropology.[6]

Schelling's Notion of the Intelligible Deed in the Freedom Essay

Schelling describes man as the free being who stands at the "summit where he has in himself the source of self-movement toward good or evil in equal portion" (SW VII: 373).[7] In man, self-will is transfigured into light; as spirit, he can (and must) redefine the order of the two wills—the particular will and the universal will—for himself. According to Schelling, the good is realized in the (nearly impossible) consent of the particular will to its subordinate position under the universal will, whereas the almost undeniable supremacy of the self-will (*Eigenwille*) over the general is classified as evil, which finds its life-worldly expression in the phenomena of selfishness and insatiable desire. It is therefore essential for man, as spirit, to bring the two wills into an arrangement within himself, which is tantamount to deciding between good and evil. The only question concerns when and how this choice is made.

To answer this question, Schelling combines Spinoza's and Kant's concepts of freedom in his notion of the intelligible deed: Free is a being that acts out of the necessity of its own nature (Spinoza's legacy) and determines itself in its own will (as Kant says). But true self-determination cannot take place in time, because everything in time is absolutely governed by cause-and-effect relationships. Moreover, freedom cannot be seen in the pure indifference between two options, since in that case the choice would be arbitrary and could not derive from one's own nature. If freedom is not located on the intra-temporal level, the self-determination of the individual must logically be based on a trans-temporal act through "which [the will] makes itself into something and is the ground of all ways of being" (SW VII: 384).[8] Referring to Kant's distinction between the thing in itself and appearance, Schelling argues that the intelligible deed is "unhampered" by time and therefore reaches to the "beginning of creation" (SW VII: 386).[9] In contrast to Augustine's prelapsarian scenario, Schelling's human being does not initially exist in an indifferent state and—at some point or after careful consideration—then choose good or evil. On the contrary, in transcendental self-decision man creates his own being and is in this sense *causu sui*. From this, and from Schelling's rejection of the liberty of indifference (*liberum arbitrium indifferentiae*), it follows that man did not originally have an actual choice

[6] See Andreas Urs Sommer, "Das Ende der antiken Anthropologie," 1–3.
[7] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 41.
[8] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 51.
[9] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 51.

between good and evil that could have been carried out by means of rational deliberation. Rather, man has always already made a decision, without being able to remember the act of decision, which he himself *is* in his innermost being and from eternity.

Now that the basic characteristics of Augustine's doctrine of original sin and Schelling's concept of an intelligible deed have been presented, it is possible to examine why both thinkers emphasize the unrecognizability and inaccessibility of these fundamental acts, which reach back to the beginning of time.

The Unrecognizability of Original Sin and of the Intelligible Deed in Spatiotemporal Life

For Augustine, original sin cannot enter human consciousness as a recognizable fact or in an empirical situation—for two main reasons: First, Adam's fall created man as a species who is devoted to his own desires and who absolutizes finitude. Therefore, as an individual, man cannot recall an act lying in the eternal past—an act which, as a constitutional condition of finite existence, precedes all possible knowledge. Second, Augustine argues from a theological perspective why a profound understanding of original sin must remain inaccessible to humankind. Referring to Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*, Augustine intends to distinguish the divine and human wills as sharply as possible. For Augustine—as for Paul—any philosophical claim to rationally reconstruct the event and consequences of the Fall, or even to evaluate them substantively, represents a selfish presumption on the part of humanity, who, as finite, flawed creatures, believe they can judge their eternal and wise Creator. Here, too, Augustine draws inspiration from Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*. In the ninth chapter of the *Epistle to the Romans*, the apostle refers*, on the one hand,* to the absolute will of God regarding the seemingly unjust condemnation of most people and the almost inexplicable redemption of selected individuals. On the other hand, due to the creatureliness of humankind, Paul rejects as illegitimate and blasphemous any complaint addressed to God about the individual state of soul:

> What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy. For Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden. One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?" But who are you, a

> human being, to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, "Why did you make me like this?" Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use? What if God, although choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction? What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory?[10]

In contrast to Augustine, Schelling argues far more phenomenologically to make visible the plausibility of the intelligible deed that manifests itself in the ethical life of an individual. Thus, Schelling not only points to the rare and mysterious moments that allow a human being to realize that "he had been what he is already from all eternity and had by no means become so first in time" (SW VII: 386).[11] Rather, for Schelling, the evidence of a time-pervading self-selection also manifests itself on a performative linguistic level when someone excuses themselves with the words "that's just the way I am" (SW VII: 386)[12] in order to justify an ethically questionable action. Furthermore, to support the idea that consistency of attitude and action constitutes the essence of human beings, Schelling assumes that the inclination toward evil is already irresistibly evident in children—without them having been able to make a rational, conscious decision for evil in life:

> How frequently does it occur that, from childhood on, from a time when, considered empirically, we can hardly attribute to him freedom and self-reflection, an individual shows a propensity [*Hang*] to evil from which it can be anticipated that he will bend neither to discipline nor to doctrine, and which consequently brings to ripeness the wicked fruit that we had foreseen in the earliest sprout [*Keim*]; and yet no one doubts his capacity to deliberate, and all are as convinced of this individual's guilt as they could only ever be if each particular action had stood within his power. This general assessment of a propensity to evil as an act of freedom which, in accordance with its origin, is utterly unconscious and even irresistible points to an act and, thus, to a life before this life, except that it is not to be thought just as prior in time since that which is intelligible is altogether outside of time. (SW VII: 386)[13]

From a speculative and philosophical perspective, however, *the reference to conscience,* in which, according to Schelling, the good principle never completely

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[10] Rom. 9:15–23.
[11] F.W. J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 51.
[12] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 52.
[13] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 52.

extinguishes, *is to be taken seriously*. In the emergence of this "inner voice of his own better nature" (SW VII: 389),[14] the human being's original decision toward evil becomes thematic negatively. In conscience, God calls man, who allowed the evil principle "to-act-within-himself [*das in-sich-handeln-Lassen*]" (SW VII: 389),[15] out of the universal will, to subordinate his particular will again. Thus, a trace of the initial choice is revealed in conscience, but now it is perceived and becomes transparent as an act that should not be.

Remarks on the Main Similarities and Differences in Augustine's and Schelling's Theories of Evil

In this section I would first like to take up a key quotation from the Freedom Essay that will guide the further analysis. In his discussion with Leibniz and the tradition of theodicy,[16] Schelling comes to the radical conclusion: "Thus, in order that there be no evil, there would have to be no God himself" (SW VII: 403).[17] It should be recognized from the outset that Schelling incorporates numerous levels of mediation in order to avoid blaming God for the existence of evil. For example, Schelling repeatedly highlights that God alone lets the ground be active, whereby the associated stimulation of selfhood[18] merely represents the possibility of evil. The realization of evil, on the other hand, is only achieved through the reversal of the structure of universal and particular will. This structure is united in God. In the intelligible deed, it is converted on the part of man by using the universal will to serve the particular will. However, the quotation points to a deeper problem, which becomes visible when the logical structure of the sentence is inverted. If the restrictive negations are removed, the sentence reads: "In order for God to exist, there must therefore be evil." Evil thus becomes the condition, not of His existence, but of God's self-revelation in history and in man. This initially provocative thesis should be explored and substantiated in the following. To this end, the first step will

[14] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 54.
[15] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 54.
[16] On the merits of Schelling's Freedom Essay theodicy, which is able to reconcile man's abuse of freedom with God's omnipotence, and does not trivialize evil but rather transforms the Fall of Man from a mythical to a systematic-theoretical form, see Friedrich Hermanni, *Die letzte Entlastung. Vollendung und Scheitern des abendländischen Theodizeeprojektes in Schellings Philosophie* (Wien: Passagen, 1994).
[17] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 66.
[18] From an eschatological perspective, Schelling also understands the "arousal of the particular will" as a means for the will of love to find a contrast in whose suppression it can testify to itself. See F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom,* 47: "Yet the ground continues to be incessantly active in individuals as well and arouses individuality [*Eigenart*] and the particular will precisely so that the will of love may appear in contrast." (SW VII: 381)

be to prove that Schelling sharpens the vital and real concept of freedom (as the capacity for good and evil) to the almost inevitable realization of evil:

> The fear of life itself drives man out of the centrum into which he was created: for this centrum, as the purest essence of all willing, is for each particular will a consuming fire; in order to be able to live within it the man of all particularity must become extinct [*absterben*], which is why the attempt to step out of this center into the periphery is almost necessary in order to seek there some calm for his selfhood. Hence, the general necessity of sin and death as the actual extinction of particularity through which all human will must cross in order to be purified. Notwithstanding this general necessity, evil remains always an individual's own choice, the ground cannot make evil as such, and every creature falls due to its own guilt (SW VII: 381.).[19]

Schelling thus speaks of the "fear of life," which—as a kind of human condition—expels self-will from the divine center and encourages the human spirit to take the place where God should be. In this way, man becomes an "inverted God" (SW VII: 381).[20] To put it bluntly: Man must sin in order to be able to exist at all, i.e., to enter into existence. The above passage poses the tragic dilemma that man had to choose evil, since he could live only in the "purest essence of all willing" (SW VII: 381)[21] if all of his particularity were to be extinguished and he were to therefore no longer exist. Nevertheless, it is not only because of the severability of the bond between the universal and the particular will, or because of the "propensity to evil" (SW VII: 386)[22] inherent in nature, that it is inescapable for man to divorce himself from God. In addition to the "fear of life," two other reasons for the necessity of evil can be adduced in the *Freiheitsschrift*, which are related to the revelation of God as a living being:

a) As a free being, God wants to reveal himself in another being that, as a "derived absoluteness" (SW VII: 346),[23] having its origin in his ground but at the same time as spirit, is equally free from the ground as well as from the

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[19] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 47f. It is important to recognize the ambiguity in Schelling's expression "fear of life": On the one hand, it refers to the fear for one's own life (the desire for existential self-preservation; in German: *um* das eigene Leben), which drives humans away from the divine center. On the other hand, it is also the fear of life in God (in German: *vor* dem Leben) that motivates man to rely on his own will. I would like to thank Christina Galego for this helpful comment and her thorough reading.

[20] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 47.

[21] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 47.

[22] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 52.

[23] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 18.

universal will.[24] However, since Schelling combines the formal-idealistic and the real concept of freedom in such a way that man always seeks to constitute himself in his own original and fundamental will—and thus against God—being human as such coincides with the choice of evil, because otherwise man would not differ from God. If God can only reflect himself in a free being and therefore needs man for his revelation, but man is necessarily evil, then God also wants evil when he wants himself as a "creaturely God," i.e., as man.

b) Even if we recoil from these drastic consequences, it can also be argued from another direction that the human life of error and deception, which corresponds to the decision for evil, is justified by Schelling in terms of the history of salvation (*Heilsgeschichte*) and as an overarching necessity. This argument can be supported by Schelling's statement that everything that exists can only reveal itself in its opposite, love only in hate and unity only in discord:

> For, if God as spirit is the inseverable unity of both principles, and this same unity is only real in the spirit of man, then, if the principles were just as indissoluble in him as in God, man would not be distinguishable from God at all; he would disappear in God, and there would be no revelation and motility of love. For every essence can only reveal itself in its opposite, love only in hate, unity in conflict. Were there no severing of principles, unity could not prove its omnipotence; were there no discord, love could not become real [*wirklich*].[25] (SW VII: 373)

It therefore requires the extreme inversion of the relationship between the two wills in the direction of the human positing of evil for the eternal unity of God to become self-aware and realize itself in contrast to a human counter-unity. In order to verify this proposition, I would like to quote another significant passage from the Freedom Essay*,* in which Schelling vindicates the manifestation of sin by stating that only in its opposition and subsequent overcoming can the essence of God appear:

> Incidentally, obvious sin does not fill us with regret, as does mere weakness or incapacity, but with fear and horror, a feeling that is only explicable on the basis that sin strives to break the word, touch the ground of creation, and profane the mystery. But this should also be revealed, for only in the opposition of sin is revealed the most inner bond of the dependence of things and the being of God which is, as it were, before all existence (not yet mitigated by it) and, for that reason,

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[24] On the important role of the ground in Schelling's *Freedom Essay*, cf. especially Sean McGrath, *The Dark Ground of Spirit: Schelling and the Unconscious* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2012); Mark Thomas, *Freedom and Ground: A Study of Schelling's Treatise on Freedom* (Albany: SUNY, 2023).

[25] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 41.

> terrifying. For God himself cloaks this principle in creatures and covers it with love in so far as he makes it into the ground and, so to speak, the carrier of beings.[26] (SW VII: 391)

We can relate this to Schelling's eschatological vision at the conclusion of the *Freiheitsschrift*, according to which the end of revelation is accompanied by "casting out evil from the good" (SW VII: 391).[27] and the "explanation of evil as complete unreality." (SW VII: 391).[28] Hence, love or goodness cannot simply be revealed in opposition to mere selfishness, but must contend with the full manifestation of evil, so that in the final outcome—as Schelling says with reference to 1 *Corinthians* 15:25—"he [Christ] must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet."[29] This leads to the assumption that the underlying evil in man had to come to the surface in order to be finally separated from the good. Only in the resurrection of Christ could death be finally overcome as "the last enemy to be destroyed."[30]

In contrast to Schelling, Augustine would never have gone so far as to legitimize original sin as a transitory stage on the way to divine self-revelation. It is also remarkable that Schelling thinks even more radically than Augustine insofar as, following the interpretation of the Freedom Essay presented here, there has never been the possibility that man could be good. If, in Schelling's case, the intelligible deed is fixed in the indispensable decision for evil, one that concerns man as a generic and individual being in equal measure, and if, at the same time, it is stressed that man, who exists within time, cannot again dispose of his transcendental freedom or revise the original decree, then the result at least seems strikingly similar: According to both authors, man is condemned to evil, whether God has consigned him to it because of an assumed original

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[26] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 55.
[27] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 55.
[28] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 67.
[29] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 68.
[30] 1 Cor 15:26. Note the Pauline reference passage 1 Cor 15: 21–28: "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in turn: Christ, the first fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.' For he 'has put everything under his feet.' Now when it says that 'everything' has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all." In the Freedom Essay, Schelling himself speaks of love—which is "Alles in Allem" (SW VII: 408)—as being even higher than the spirit, a reference to the *First Letter to the Corinthians*. On Schelling's philosophical concept of Christ, see Christian Danz, *Die philosophische Christologie F.W.J. Schellings* (Stuttgart Bad-Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1996).

sin (Augustine), or whether man himself must decide in favor of the inversion of the principles—an operation that Schelling identifies with evil—to distinguish himself from God and to be able to emerge as an individual. The extent to which Schelling borrows motifs from Augustine's doctrine of original sin in the *Freiheitsschrift*, and the way he intensifies these motifs in existential terms, can be demonstrated in particular by the following key passage:

> Once evil had been generally aroused in creation by the reaction of the ground to revelation, man apprehended himself from eternity in his individuality and selfishness, and all who are born are born with the dark principle of evil within[,] even if this evil is raised to self-consciousness only through the emergence [*Eintreten*] of its opposite. As man is now, the good as light can be developed only from the dark principle through a divine transformation [*Transmutation*]. This original evil in man, which can be denied only by one who has come to know man in and outside himself only superficially, although wholly independent of freedom in relation to contemporary empirical life, is still in its origin his own act and for that reason alone original sin.[31] (SW VII: 388)

It is very telling that Schelling speaks of "original sin," whereby he directly refers to the Augustinian coinage of this crucial term. Insofar as Schelling believes that man has always had to choose evil in order to constitute himself as an individual, he erases any prospect of an original good, which at least Adam as the first man could still have selected in Augustine's conception. In Schelling's view, therefore, evil is much more deeply inscribed in the human condition than in Augustine's. With reference to the above quotation, some aspects can be highlighted that point to illuminating parallels between the two thinkers and at the same time illustrate how much Schelling transcends Augustine in his radicalism:

Similarity (a): Schelling and Augustine are in agreement in believing that every individual is born with a guilt that is inherent in the whole of humanity as such; all human beings receive the "dark principle" (SW VII: 388)[32] without any possibility of conscious rejection or free renunciation.

Similarity (b): Man cannot become good or act virtuously of his own free will. Whereas in Schelling's *Freiheitsschrift* and in *On Free Choice of the Will* [*De libero arbitrio*] man can at least autonomously ask God for help and admit his need for redemption, in late Augustine even the humble turning to God presupposes an act of divine care and grace (*gratia praeveniens et operans*).

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[31] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 53.
[32] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 53.

Difference (a): An important difference between the two authors can be seen in the fact that Schelling's original evil is not inherited by biological procreation, but is created anew by each individual through his or her own actions.[33] In this *a priori* self-will, the moral disposition is established once and for all, as it were, in order to then unfold in every single intra-temporal act.

Difference (b): Furthermore, it can generally be underscored that Augustine's thinking—especially in early works such as *On the Happy Life* (*De beata vita*), *On Order* (*De ordine*), and *On Christian Belief. True Religion* (*De vera religione*)—is influenced by Neoplatonism to a far greater extent than Schelling's Freedom Essay. This (neo-)Platonic influence has the effect of Augustine's proclaiming a dualism between the transcendent-eternal and the spatial-temporal-empirical world—and this applies to all phases of his work, finally culminating in *The City of God* (*De civitate Dei*). This dualism in turn makes it easier for him to justify and maintain the ethical binary opposition of "good" vs. "evil," in that the one reference element of good is assigned to the eternal or the divine sphere of transcendence, while evil, in contrast, only has an effect in the sensory world. In deviation from Augustine, it is characteristic of Schelling, especially in the *Freedom Essay*, that he does not divide "good" and "evil" into two realms—separated by a *chorism* and governed by two different temporal orders. Schelling thus breaks through Augustinian dualism. As was shown above, however, Schelling's conception of the capacity for freedom cannot simply be localized on the side of the axiological-ontological good—since man must almost inevitably choose evil (i.e., turning away from God) in order to individuate himself.

The fundamental ontological difference from Augustine can be seen in the fact that Schelling anchors the process of decision and individuation in the Freedom Essay in the center of a pantheistic-Spinozian system framework. For Schelling, all things remain in God, who has nature in himself, whereas for Augustine, God is conceived in a genuinely Christian sense as a transcendent creator who stands beyond the natural order. Last but not least, it is of considerable philosophical-historical significance that Schelling, alongside Gnostic tendencies, Pauline theology, and Spinoza's pantheism,[34] draws in particular on Jakob Böhme[35] as a source of inspiration. In incorporating

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[33] With regard to the question of whether each person performs the intelligible deed for herself and uniquely—which is affirmed in this paper— or whether, even for Schelling, each individual necessarily participates in a collective original fault, I thank Kyla Bruff for her astute and clarifying remarks.

[34] On the question of the compatibility of pantheism, freedom, and system in Schelling's Freedom Essay, see Bernard Freydberg, *Schelling's Dialogical Freedom Essay: Provocative Philosophy Then and Now* (Albany: SUNY, 2008), 19–30.

[35] See Jacob Böhme, *Psychologia vera, oder Viertzig Fragen Von der Seelen, Ihrem Urstande, Essentz, Wesen, Natur und Eigenschaft, was sie von Ewigkeit in Ewigkeit sey* (1620), in Jacob Böhme,

Böhme's motifs, such as the "*Ungrund*," divine longing, the will that initially desires itself alone, and the overall concept of a becoming and suffering God into his system of freedom, Schelling moves even farther away from Augustine—who endows God with the classical attributes of immutability, omniscience, eternity, and omnipotence—from an ontological perspective.

5. Conclusion

The status of the intelligible deed in the Freedom Essay remains ambivalent and controversial. It cannot be identified with the Fall of Man exclusively in negativist terms, since the intelligible deed is valued positively by Schelling in at least three respects: Firstly, Schelling privileges the intelligible deed insofar as it coincides with the peak of human existence. It is the intelligible deed that enables freedom as the capacity for good and evil to become real in the first place; and it is with this conception of an initial, transcendental decision that Schelling overcomes the formal, idealistic concept of freedom. Secondly, Schelling solves Kant's third antinomy with the intelligible deed by pointing out how a true self-determination of man can arise uninfluenced by empirical circumstances and the causality of nature. Thirdly and finally, Schelling's central concern about the contradiction between freedom and necessity and the search for their true unity finds its solution in the figure of the intelligible deed. Schelling thereby approaches—as perhaps only Plato before him in book ten of the *Republic*—the deepest problem of philosophy: to shed light on the roots and origins of the individual self.

Schelling's subversive theory of the intelligible deed, on the other hand, disrupts the systematic framework of German idealism. In the Freedom Essay, Schelling vehemently rejects Augustine's doctrine of predestination because it leaves no room for human freedom. It is Schelling's declared aim to defend human freedom, whereas Augustine, at least in Schelling's perspective, delegates the decision for good or evil to an unexplainable divine decree. Since Kant and Fichte, the topic of human freedom has been incorporated into the fundamental principles of idealism and forms its philosophical center. Schelling explodes this center from within. For Schelling, human freedom can be saved only at the cost of the individual carrying out on himself what, in Augustine's view, resulted from a collective punishment of man by God: In this interpretation of the Freedom Essay, man has to condemn himself to evil and guilt in order to be able to exist at all. Schelling therefore does not emancipate himself from Augustine's doctrine of original sin in order to protect human freedom. Instead, he succumbs to the philosophical temptation

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Facsimile reprint of the 1730 edition in eleven volumes, ed. Will Erich Peuckert, vol. 3 (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1960).

of an out-of-time self-determination to such an extent that only a God can save man ("*nur ein Gott kann uns noch retten*"). Building on this, we can fully agree with Lore Hühn that Schelling radicalizes the idealistic concept of freedom from within:

> The intelligible deed is therefore a cipher whose sin-theological interpretation mainly states that the original exercise of freedom coincides with the culpable transgression of this freedom [Die intelligible Tat ist mithin eine Chiffre, deren sündentheologische Lesart hauptsächlich besagt, daß der ursprüngliche Vollzug der Freiheit mit der schuldhaften Verfehlung dieser Freiheit zusammenfällt].[36]

It can therefore be asked whether a moderate interpretation of the *Freiheitsschrift* should be welcomed—even against Schelling's own, sometimes harsh statements about the inevitability of sin or being evil. Following this rather neutral and conciliatory reading, man could choose the original good by his own power and will. From Augustine's point of view, this position would have to be labelled as Pelagian. Admittedly, Schelling also denies that Cato, who is presented in the *Freiheitsschrift* as a model of good character, acts out of free self-determination. This is because true goodness is brought about by a "divine magic," which Schelling describes as the "immediate presence of what has Being in consciousness and cognition" (SW VII: 392).[37] Just as evil is based on the discord between the two principles, good consists in their complete accord. This unity cannot be created by man's self-determination, for this would presuppose "that the two principles were not in themselves one; but how are they supposed to become one if they are not one" (SW VII: 391)?[38] Thus Schelling understands the bond that unites the two principles as "divine" (SW VII: 392).[39]

On the other hand, the perfectly good man seems to have the greatest freedom and autonomy, being bound only by his "own law" and affirming what is necessary with his "spirit and heart" (SW VII: 391).[40] Nevertheless, it is revealing that Schelling describes this correspondence between the awareness of spiritual light and moral behavior as "religiosity according to the original meaning of the word" (SW VII: 391) and as "conscientiousness" (SW VII: 391).[41] Finally, when Schelling integrates the concept of faith, it becomes clear that the "severity of disposition" (SW VII: 393)[42] derives above all from

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[36] Hühn, "Die intelligible Tat. Zu einer Gemeinsamkeit Schellings und Schopenhauers," 59.
[37] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 56.
[38] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 56.
[39] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 56.
[40] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 56.
[41] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 56.
[42] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 57.

the relationship of the particular will of man to the divine light, which can only be formed and maintained by God.[43] Schelling sees the "original meaning" of faith as "trusting, having confidence, in the divine that excludes all choice" (SW VII: 393).[44] If faith is the basis of moral behavior, but faith only exists in the fact that man acts as "his God instructs him" (SW VII: 393),[45] then there seems to be no freedom or self-determination of man for the good. Yet man is not even free to permit the good spirit to be present in his consciousness. Schelling insists that even this opening or closing of oneself to divine help is already decided in that "initial action" (SW VII: 389)[46] through which a person is herself and no other. If, therefore, the intelligible deed of the individual does not already include an openness to the possible influence of divine grace, man will always have to be evil.

But the critique must then be directed at Schelling as to whether human freedom is not misconceived, does not cancel itself out, should it not be justified in any other way than as an original offense against God and as the guilt of self-affirmation. The dreadful implication would then be that man has always been entangled in a mysterious and unavailable self-positioning. He would be forced to lead a life of deception and sin if God did not exercise mercy.

All in all, it is difficult to see what has become of Schelling's enthusiastic claim to honor freedom as the "beginning and end of philosophy." With some provocative exaggeration, one could even claim that Schelling, despite all assertions to the contrary, subtly adopts the dualism of Gnosticism or Manichaeism. This dualism maintains that there is an evil creator and a good savior God: In the *Freedom Essay*, the "consuming fire" (SW VII: 391)[47] of God first drives man out of the center. Since human particular will cannot exist in God, man is constrained to turn to himself and to favor evil. God, as love, can thus retain his innocence in order to redeem man from his precarious situation. Paradoxically, the individual has been dragged into this painful situation by the ineluctable isolation from the universal will; an isolation that God himself desired as a self-revealing person. Thus, in an intensification of the doctrine of original sin, Schelling's Freedom Essay holds that man is always born with corruption, while Augustine takes the less extreme position that the evil principle was not innate in man from the beginning of the human species.

At this point it becomes clear that a further, sharp criticism of Schelling could be developed on the basis of Augustine's doctrine of grace: the very fact

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[43] On the theological embedding of the *Freedom Essay*, see John Laughland, *Schelling versus Hegel: From German Idealism to Christian Metaphysics* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2016).
[44] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 58.
[45] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 58.
[46] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 54.
[47] F.W.J. Schelling, *Freedom Essay*, 56.

that human beings believe that they can assign their own character to themselves in a free act—a position that Schelling obviously helps to philosophically consecrate in the Freedom Essay—is for Augustine an expression of the deepest, even unsurpassable human hubris. Even if, in line with the sin-theological reading of the Freedom Essay, Schelling should admit that the act of human self-creation is always tainted with guilt, for Augustine the problem lies one level deeper: namely, it is based on Schelling's pretension that man's essence and being could be formed independently of God, or—even worse—that this self-creation was also wanted by God. In the end, it could also be said that Augustine—as Pelagius and Julian pointed out—makes God an arbitrary ruler, while Schelling tends to use evil as a means of divine revelation.

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

Christoph Binkelmann

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 Binkelmann, "'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.

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[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 A^2, 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

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[15] Archive of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, *Schelling Nachlass*, no. 96, 12r (my translation).
[16] See Christoph Binkelmann, "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*.

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Life versus Being: Schelling's Conceptualization of God

Tommaso Mauri

—God is a life, not merely a Being.
(SW VII: 403)

The quote in the epigraph makes it clear that, starting from the Freedom Essay, Schelling considers the category of life to be the most appropriate for describing God. Opposed in the quoted passage to the notion of being, this category replaces that of absolute identity, which had informed his earlier system. Deeply influenced by Spinoza, in the system of identity, Schelling had conceived God or the Absolute as the absolute identity of the real and the ideal, as an eternal and non-becoming essence (*Wesen*), absolutely simple and indivisible—as that which is entirely devoid of potencies.[1] Absolute identity is itself conceived as an all-encompassing womb within which particular beings are differentiated—beings that do not exist in and of themselves, but only insofar as they participate in absolute identity. The characterization of God as absolute identity therefore implies a fundamentally ontological and onto-

[1] According to §59 of the Würzburg *System of Philosophy*, "The Absolute is beyond all potency, or it is absolutely devoid of potency (*schlechthin potenzlos)*" (SW VI: 212; F.W.J. Schelling, "System of Philosophy in General and of the Philosophy of Nature in Particular," *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory: Three Essays by F.W.J. Schelling*, trans. Thomas Pfau (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 139–194, here 192).

theological conception: God is "*Being* itself (*das Seyn selbst*) … necessarily eternal and immutable" (SW VI: 178).[2]

As is well known, the investigation of certain specific themes—freedom, evil, radical finitude, history—prompted by various polemical exchanges during the pivotal period from 1804 to 1809, urged Schelling to rethink a new concept of God. This concept would avoid the stillness and fixity of Spinoza's substance and of *being* as it was elaborated within the metaphysical tradition.[3] The main goal of Schelling's inquiry between 1809 and 1815 is the development of his living concept of God, one capable of responding to the concerns that had motivated the move beyond the identity-philosophy. This coincides with the attempt to grant God a form of freedom with respect to being (*Seyn*)—the latter term burdened by a heavy idealist legacy according to which being would no longer denote fullness and positivity, but rather necessity, objectification, and stasis: "To begin philosophy with being (*Seyn*) is to turn it upside down, to condemn oneself, and never to penetrate to the heart of freedom" (SW XII: 34).[4]

The search for a living God accompanies Schelling to the very end of his philosophical journey. Toward the end, however, especially through a substantial engagement with Aristotle, he eventually returns to traditional metaphysical conceptuality, finding in the notion of act—and more specifically of individual actuality—the most suitable tool, within the limits of a purely rational philosophy, to express the coexistence of being and life in God.

The following discussion is divided into five sections, each devoted to a key moment in the development of Schelling's thought concerning the concept of God. The first explores the departure from the system of absolute identity and the dynamization of the concept of God in the works from 1809 to 1815. The second retraces the central terms of the dispute with Jacobi, which represents Schelling's most explicit confrontation with the traditional metaphysical-religious conception of God. The third focuses on the evolution of Schelling's conception of God during the Erlangen and especially Munich years, in which he emphasizes God's absoluteness and freedom from being. The fourth section is dedicated to the *Presentation of the Purely Rational Philosophy*, in which Schelling, drawing on the Aristotelian notions of individuality and ἐνέργεια (enérgeia; activity), offers a new conceptualization of life and of God.

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[2] Schelling, "System of Philosophy in General and of the Philosophy of Nature in Particular," 168.

[3] In particular, here Schelling is referring to the scholastic tradition and modern theism. Although the latter sought to dynamize the concept of God as "actus purus" (pure act) through the notions of "actuositas" (activeness) or "ens actuosissimum," (the most actual being) Schelling holds that this attempt failed (see F. W. J. Schelling, "Monument to Jacobi's Work on the Divine Things," trans. Hadi Fakhoury, *Kabiri* 4 (2024): 167–198, here 192).

[4] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophie der Mythologie. Erstes Buch. Der Monotheismus*, SW XII: 1–132.

Finally, the last section situates the results Schelling reaches in the *Presentation* within the broader framework of his late philosophy, including positive philosophy.

As is already clear from this brief overview, the methodology I adopt in this paper is not that of a close analysis of Schelling's argumentation in a single text, but rather of the several approaches of a *longue durée* inquiry aimed at identifying a specific trend within Schelling's late philosophical theology. This does not mean, however, that each of Schelling's works considered here lacks internal complexity: on the contrary, each occupies a precise place within the philosophical systematics of that period and responds to specific challenges and provocations, which, however, cannot be addressed in detail here.[5]

The Living Concept of God

The Freedom Essay opens with a clear accusation against Spinoza, targeting "the lifelessness of his system, the sterility of its form, the poverty of concepts and expressions, … his mechanistic view of nature" (SW VII: 350).[6] Schelling's strategy for dynamizing the Spinozian system consists in applying the concept of life—as theorized in his earlier nature-philosophy—to the Absolute itself. The identity-philosophy, largely drawing on the results of the nature-philosophy, made extensive use of the category of life, which Schelling had described in the *On the World Soul* as "free play of forces" (SW II: 566).[7] This category, however, was applied to individual natural beings, or at most to the Absolute considered as nature. The Absolute as such, as we have seen, was not conceived as life, but rather as absolute and eternal identity.

To vivify the system, then, Schelling decides to apply to the Absolute itself a distinction already theorized in the *Presentation of my System of Philosophy*—that between "being [*Wesen*] insofar as it exists and being [*Wesen*] insofar as it is merely the ground of existence" (SW VII: 357).[8] By distinguishing between God insofar as He exists and God insofar as He is the ground of existence, Schelling believes he can achieve an internal dynamization of the concept of God, thereby allowing Him to be conceived as living. In fact, already in the

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[5] See Thomas Buchheim, "The Method and Structure of Schelling's Late Philosophy," *Kabiri*, 2 (2020): 1–14.

[6] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006), 20. For various interpretations of Schelling's critique of Spinoza, see Benjamin Norris, "Life and Parallelism in Schelling's Critique of Spinoza," *Kabiri*, 4 (2024): 78–99.

[7] F.W.J. Schelling, *Von der Weltseele*, SW II: 345–583. Where no published translation is indicated, the English translation is mine.

[8] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 27.

identity-philosophy, Schelling had conceived the Absolute as the absolute identity of the real principle (which, in the Freedom Essay, becomes the ground of existence) and the ideal principle (corresponding to that-which-exists). However, in terms for which Schelling would later reproach Spinoza's system (SW VII: 443)[9], the two principles remained entirely inactive in relation to one another, not acting upon each other in a living opposition. The new conceptualization of the relationship between the real and the ideal principles—as ground of existence and that-which-exists—allows Schelling to think of them as reciprocally determining one another, just as occurred in the description of life in his earlier nature-philosophy. Indeed, a careful reading of the texts reveals that the characterization of the relationship between God insofar as He exists and His ground closely mirrors the account of life provided in *On the World Soul*. Consider the following two passages: the first from the *On the World Soul*, the second from the Freedom Essay:

> The object of our investigation is *the origin of life*. *Life*, however, consists in a *cycle*, in a *succession of processes* which *continuously return into themselves*, so that it is impossible to indicate which process actually *kindles* life, which is the *earlier*, which the *later*. Every organization is a self-contained whole in which everything is *at the same time* [*zugleich*], and where the mechanical way of explanation abandons us altogether, because in such a whole there is no *before* and no *after*. We can therefore do no better than assert that *neither of those opposing processes determines the other*, but *that both mutually determine each other*, both maintain a reciprocal equilibrium. (SW II: 549)[10]

> In the circle out of which everything becomes, it is no contradiction that that through which the One is generated may itself be in turn begotten by it. Here there is no first and last because all things mutually presuppose each other, nothing is another thing and yet it is not without another thing. God has in Himself an inner ground of His existence that in this respect precedes Him in existence; but, precisely in this way, God is again the *prius* of the ground in so far as the ground, even as such, could not exist if God did not exist *actu*. (SW VII: 358)[11]

The comparison between these two passages clearly shows how Schelling applies to the Absolute the very same category of life that he had developed in his studies on nature. It is no coincidence, in fact, that the ground of existence

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[9] F.W.J. Schelling, "Stuttgart Seminars," *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory: Three Essays by F.W.J. Schelling*, trans. Thomas Pfau (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 195–243, here 214.
[10] Schelling, *Von der Weltseele*.
[11] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 28.

is also defined as "nature in God" (SW VII: 358).[12] As Mark Thomas has aptly pointed out, the fundamental feature of this characterization of life (and thus of God) is the notion of equiprimordiality (*Gleichursprünglichkeit*): Schelling moves away from an all-from-one model of grounding—that is, the idea that everything that exists has its sufficient reason in a single ultimate ground. *God as the ground of existence* and *God insofar as He exists* are equally original, and it would be misguiding to attempt to derive one from the other.[13]

Equiprimordiality alone, however, is not sufficient to capture Schelling's notion of life. It also includes two further features: struggle and development. In the writings of this period, Schelling repeatedly and insistently affirms that "where there is no struggle, there is no life" (SW VII: 400).[14] This means that the real principle—the dark ground, the nature in God—does not peacefully submit to the clarity of the ideal claims its own persistence. The presence of this dark ground breaks the unclouded clarity of absolute identity, which is self-transparent and eternally fully unfolded intellection, and makes possible the historicity of the Absolute. Anticipating what Gadamer would articulate a century and a half later, Schelling recognizes that there is no life without history, and that "to be historical means never to be completely absorbed in self-knowledge."[15] The ground, in fact, remains opaque and inscrutable until the end of time, when, the division of the two principles having been completed, they will be reunited in the eternal mystery of love, and pantheism will be fulfilled. Until then, it will remain as "the incomprehensible base of reality in things, the indivisible remainder, that which with the greatest exertion cannot be resolved in understanding but rather remains eternally in the ground" (SW VII: 359–360).[16]

However, life, as a struggle between the two principles, is not exhausted in a mere, incessant reshuffling of forces. Life is not simply the continuous appearance and dissolution of different forms in a zero-sum game. On the contrary, it entails a productive and ontologically creative becoming, that is, a free development. God's life is the gradual ascent from darkness to clarity, from unconsciousness to awareness, from ground to personality. Clarity, awareness, and personality are ontologically superior (although not prior) to darkness, unconsciousness, and ground. Life, therefore, implies an

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[12] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 27.
[13] Mark J. Thomas, *Freedom and Ground: A Study of Schelling's Treatise on Freedom* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2023), 7–8.
[14] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 63. See also Schelling, "Stuttgart Seminars," 208.
[15] Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London–New York: Continuum, 2004), 301 (translation slightly modified).
[16] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 29.

ascending development, an ontological increase: what comes later is ontologically superior to what is before.

In the diaries from those years, Schelling pushes this conception to its limits, overturning the classical understanding of the relationship between acting and being in favor of a dynamic and living characterization of God. Life is not a movement grafted onto a preexisting being; rather, it coincides with the movement itself, with the immanent force through which it comes to light:

> What is God, then? God is a consuming fire, an eternal act of production of that being (*Wesen*), thus that being is not apart from this act.—It [that being] only occurs in it [the eternal act]—only as a product. It does not exist at all without this *actus*. The *actus* does not come from that being; we cannot even think of that being without this *actus*, it does not exist at all without it—it exists only as actualized being (*verwirklichtes Wesen*). …. God Himself is only the eternal movement towards the actualization of God's being (*Wesen*). Goes through stages. We cannot think of God apart from this movement, as if He were first for Himself and then entered into this movement.[17]

What is here expressed in classical terms—movement, *agere*, and *esse*—is then conceptualized within the lexicon of life:

> God is living; thus, He lives or has a life, and cannot be separated from this life in any way. … All life is the life of something, the life of a being (*Wesen*), and the actualization of this being. In this actualization of the being lies the being itself; "life builds itself up."[18]

Here, Schelling employs the categories of life, act, and movement as antithetical to being, which is downgraded to the point of being treated as a synonym for thing (*Ding*)—a static, objective, dead notion, inadequate for describing the unconditioned (*das Unbedingte*), which by definition cannot be made a thing.

The living concept of God, then, entails the equiprimordiality of the ground of existence and that-which-exists, a ceaseless struggle between these two principles, and an ascending development toward ever greater perfection. This characterization of God is antithetical not only to Spinoza's substance but, indeed—and perhaps even more so—to the classical and traditional conception of rational theology and the metaphysical principles underlying it.

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[17] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophische Entwürfe und Tagebücher 1814–1816. Die Weltalter II – Über die Gottheiten von Samothrake*, ed. L. Knatz, H.J. Sandkühler, and M. Schraven (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2002), 7.

[18] Schelling, *Philosophische Entwürfe und Tagebücher 1814–1816*, 29–30.

In fact, the living concept of God dismantles some of the fundamental metaphysical axioms of scholastic rational theology, particularly: 1) *ex nihilo nihil* (nothing comes from nothing), 2) *agere sequitur esse* ("to act" follows "to be"), and 3) *quod est in potentia non reducitur ad actum nisi per ens actu* (what is in potency is not reduced to act except by something actual). The dynamic autopoiesis of life contradicts the rigid and essentialist consequentiality of the ontological order upheld by scholastic metaphysics. In the *Stuttgart Seminars*, Schelling is fully aware of the reversal he is effecting with respect to the metaphysical tradition and of the incompatibility between the two perspectives, and he clearly advocates the rejection of the traditional concept of God:

> If we are to form an idea of the primordial being (*Urwesen*), its being (*Seyn*) and life, we only have the choice between two conceptions. (a) Either the primordial being is for us something complete all at once and immutably present. This is the usual concept of God in the so-called rational religion and in all abstract systems. But the more we elevate this concept of God, the more God loses for us in vitality, the less He can be understood as an actual, personal, and properly living being like us. [(b)] If we demand a God whom we can regard as a completely living, personal being, then we must also regard Him as completely human, we must assume that His life has the greatest analogy with human life, that in Him, alongside the eternal being, there is also an eternal becoming; in short, that He has everything in common with man except dependency. (SW VII: 432)[19]

Schelling is aware that this conception stands in contrast to the traditional notion of God as *ens realissimum* (the most real being) (SW VII: 435).[20] However, contrary to what one might expect, in the *Stuttgart Seminars* he does not even attempt to reconcile the two positions, but simply rejects the traditionally metaphysical conception of God in favor of a God understood anthropomorphically—one more closely aligned with religious consciousness than with philosophical abstraction. His speculation, deeply imbued with a religious impulse particularly strong in those years due in part to tragic family events, was guided by the conviction that "a metaphysically elevated God will benefit neither our minds nor our hearts" (SW VII: 429).[21]

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[19] Schelling, "Stuttgart Seminars," 206 (translation slightly modified).
[20] Schelling, "Stuttgart Seminars," 208.
[21] Schelling, "Stuttgart Seminars," 204.

Life versus Being: The Controversy with Jacobi

Life and being, as is now clear, are not merely conceptual categories concerning philosophical theology; rather, they imply two radically different metaphysical visions. A confrontation between these opposing views takes place between November 1811—when Schelling receives Jacobi's *On Divine Things and their Revelation*—and January 1812—when Schelling publishes the *Monument to Jacobi's Work on the Divine Things*. In his text, Jacobi makes it clear that there are only two classes of philosophers, fundamentally opposed to one another:

> Those who have emerged and gradually developed the more perfect from the imperfect; and those who assert that the most perfect is the first, and that all starts with it and from it. … The doctrine of the former category is opposed to the doctrine of the latter, so that no approach is possible in between, and even less possible is a unification of them through a third doctrine where they reconcile and become undifferentiated.[22]

Jacobi calls the first category "naturalists" and the second "theists." Naturally, in keeping with the metaphysical tradition, as well as with a worldview aligned with Christianity, he counts himself among the theists: the principle of reality is the creator God, that is, a moral and personal principle, an intelligence that knows and wills. God is perfect from the beginning and creates the world freely as its cause. By contrast, for the naturalists, God is not the cause but merely the ground of the universe and becomes together with it. The living God of the naturalists, according to Jacobi, would be nothing other than the absolute productivity of nature. For this reason, the choice between these two modes of philosophizing is absolutely exclusive: "Man has only one alternative: either he derives from one, or he derives from nothing. We put the one before the nothing, and we name him God because this one (*Ein*) must necessarily be a personal one (*Einer*), otherwise it would be the same universal nothing but differently named."[23]

Schelling, by contrast, considers it necessary to find a living connection between naturalism—"the system that asserts a nature in God"—and theism—the system "that asserts consciousness, intelligence, and free will in God" (SW VIII: 69).[24] He believes that naturalism must constitute "*the*

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[22] Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, "Von den Göttlichen Dingen und ihrer Offenbarung," *Schriften zum Streit um die göttlichen Dinge und ihre Offenbarung* (Werke, Bd. 3), ed. Walter Jaeschke (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2000), 3–136, here 94–95.
[23] Jacobi, "Von den Göttlichen Dingen und ihrer Offenbarung," 26.
[24] Schelling, "Monument to Jacobi's Work on the Divine Things," 189.

foundation, *the necessary antecedent* of theism" (SW VIII: 69);[25] otherwise, theism, which indeed forms the higher part of the system, would "hover completely in the void" (SW VIII: 69).[26] Ultimately, Schelling expresses the concern that conceiving the relationship between naturalism and theism as an either/or alternative leads to "posit[ing] at the same time *an unnatural God and a godless nature*" (SW VIII: 70).[27]

Schelling's strategy for reconciling naturalists and theists consists in subdividing each of these two classes of philosophers into two further subclasses, in order to show that a particular version of naturalism is not incompatible with a particular version of theism. Naturalists are divided into what we might call "external naturalists"—namely, "those who allow the more perfect to rise from a less perfect [being] *that is independent of it and different from it*" (SW VIII: 63)[28]—and "internal naturalists," that is, those "who allow the more perfect to rise *from what is less perfect in it*" (SW VIII: 63).[29] Theists, in turn, are divided—so to speak—between "classical theists," who hold that the most perfect is already *actu* (in act) as such before all things, and "explicatory theists," who maintain that it is rather only *potentia* (in potency) before all things. For the former, the most perfect is already complete in itself from the very beginning and undergoes no change; for the latter, it undergoes development and ontological growth.

Schelling considers the position of the external naturalists to be the weakest and most untenable on a general level, while he believes that classical theists face a problem in justifying the existence of what is less perfect, that is, a problem with the issue of creation. Classical theists insist on the necessity of a transcendent and creating God, yet they fail to offer convincing reasons that God should create something other than Himself, given that He is already perfect in Himself.

Schelling regards these first two positions to be incompatible with each of the others, while he considers the views of internal naturalists and explicatory theists to be deeply compatible and to contribute to an evolutionary account of God capable of offering a more adequate understanding of creation and of the relationship between God and nature. Internal naturalism is the position presented in the Freedom Essay: the more perfect—that is, God insofar as He exists—arises from what is less perfect in Him, namely the ground of His existence. Schelling considers this view compatible with explicatory theism, that is, with the idea that the ground of

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[25] Schelling, "Monument to Jacobi's Work on the Divine Things," 189.
[26] Schelling, "Monument to Jacobi's Work on the Divine Things," 189.
[27] Schelling, "Monument to Jacobi's Work on the Divine Things," 190.
[28] Schelling, "Monument to Jacobi's Work on the Divine Things," 185.
[29] Schelling, "Monument to Jacobi's Work on the Divine Things," 185.

existence is God *potentia*, who undergoes a development that leads Him, at a later stage, to become God *actu*.

Once again, the key category in the characterization of God is life: "My real opinion, which I affirm openly, is that all life, without distinction, starts from a state of envelopment, because in relation to the subsequent stage of its development and unfolding, it is like a dead and dark seed before it is lowered into the earth" (SW VIII: 78).[30] This applies all the more to God:

> I posit God as first and as last, as alpha and as omega. As alpha, however, He is not what He is as omega; and insofar as He is God *sensu eminenti* [in an eminent sense] only as omega, He cannot also, as alpha, be God in the same sense, nor, strictly speaking, can He be called God, unless it were explicitly said that He is the *still undeveloped* God, *Deus implicitus* [implicit God], while, as omega, He is *Deus explicitus* [explicit God]. (SW VIII: 81)[31]

In the transition from internal naturalism to explicatory theism, however, the category of life undergoes a subtle but fundamental reconfiguration. While in the Freedom Essay Schelling had spoken of a circle of reciprocal grounding, in which "all things mutually presuppose each other" and in which "there is no first and last," it now becomes clear that one can distinguish between a before (*Deus implicitus*) and an after (*Deus explicitus*), and that what comes before does not require what comes after in order to exist. In other words, the shift in emphasis from internal naturalism (Freedom Essay) to explicatory theism (*Monument*), which coincides with the reformulation of the relationship between the ground of existence and that-which-exists in terms of *Deus implicitus* and *Deus explicitus*, moves somewhat closer to Jacobi's perspective and to traditional metaphysics. *Deus implicitus*, in fact—unlike the ground of existence, "which, even as such, could not exist if God did not exist *actu*"—possesses its own ontological autonomy. Just as the seed is not yet the plant *actu*, but only *potentia*, and yet is something *actu* (i.e., the seed itself), so too *Deus implicitus* is not yet God *actu*, but is nonetheless something *actu*.

Certainly, interpreting in this way the shift from the dialectic between the ground of existence and that-which-exists to that between *Deus implicitus* and *Deus explicitus* raises some problems. One might ask: where does the actual existence of *Deus implicitus* as such come from? Does it not also require its own ground of existence? Abandoning the reciprocal grounding and the equiprimordiality of *Deus implicitus* and *Deus explicitus* demands the formulation of a new model for the relationship between the two terms and for the

[30] Schelling, "Monument to Jacobi's Work on the Divine Things," 196.
[31] Schelling, "Monument to Jacobi's Work on the Divine Things," 198.

grounding of the first. In the *Monument to Jacobi*, these issues remain open and are not addressed explicitly, but it is clear that Schelling is setting out on a new path—one that seeks to reconceptualize God's being and life without recourse to the notion of equiprimordiality, which, increasingly, Schelling sees as a threat to God's absoluteness.

It would be mistaken, however, to read the *Monument to Jacobi* through an overly irenic hermeneutic. While the articulation of explicatory theism certainly moves a step beyond simple naturalism—the target of Jacobi's critique—it remains true that it still constitutes an evolutionary account of God, one that radically contrasts with the claims advanced by Jacobi in defense of classical theism. The entire speculative endeavor of the *Ages of the World* makes it clear that Schelling has not abandoned his evolutionary monotheism; on the contrary, Schelling holds that the eternal becoming within God constitutes the archetype of the entire cosmotheogonic history: "the very forces whose simultaneous combination constitutes the inner life are the same forces that step forth externally, one after the other, as the principles of life developing through consecutive ages. The same stages that in their simultaneity can be regarded as potencies of being appear, in their succession, as periods of becoming and development" (WA I: 25).[32]

God's Life as Freedom from Being

Already in the *Ages of the World*, but even more markedly in Erlangen and Munich, a further concern emerges in Schelling's characterization of God—namely, the need to secure God's freedom with respect to the world and to being in general. For life is not divine life unless it is free. Already in Stuttgart, through his reconceptualization of the distinction between the real and the ideal principles as a distinction between *Seyn* and *Seyende*, Schelling had begun to move in this direction. Over time, however, even the very notion of *Seyende* came to seem to him too static to express the overflowing exuberance of divine life.

In Erlangen, Schelling initially renounces the concept of God understood as a mere being (*ein Seyendes*), and instead he describes the absolute subject as eternal freedom (*ewige Freiheit*). Freedom, Schelling emphasizes, is not a mere property of the absolute subject, but its very essence: "But I do not want to express it like this: it is that which is free to take on form. As then, this freedom would appear as a *property*, which presupposes a still distinct and independent subject—rather, freedom is the *essence* of the subject, or it is itself

[32] F.W.J. Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, trans. by Joseph P. Lawrence (Albany: SUNY Press, 2019), 84. The abbreviation "WA" refers to the following German edition: F.W.J. Schelling, *Die Weltalter. Fragmente. In den Urfassungen von 1811 und 1813*, ed. Manfred Schröter (Munich: Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1946).

nothing other than eternal freedom" (SW IX: 220).[33] The same pattern found in the 1814–1816 diaries referring to act, movement, and life is repeated here: there is no such thing as a living or free *being*; life and freedom have a meta-ontological character insofar as they aim to replace the very category of being. It is not possible here to go into the details of this phase of Schelling's philosophy.[34] It will suffice to note, however, that in Erlangen this paradoxical enterprise is more asserted than truly realized. The self-revelation and self-knowledge of eternal freedom, in fact, become entangled in the laws of a dialectical process that recalls Hegel's cunning of reason.[35]

A further shift toward a more resolute affirmation of divine freedom occurs in Munich. Here, the dialectic between ground and existence related to the autopoiesis and inner life of God is transformed into a dialectic between God and being related to the doctrine of creation. This change is accompanied by two others of fundamental importance: (1) the move from a predominantly bipolar dialectic (B and A, real and ideal principle, ground of existence and that-which-exists) to a triadic dialectic (*Seynkönnendes–Seynmüssendes–Seynsollendes*, subject–object–subject/object, $-A +A \pm A$, $B\ A^2\ A^3$); and (2) the fact that this triadic dialectic of potencies, which encompasses the fundamental real *versus* ideal opposition, becomes a "local" or "regional" opposition, subordinated to a new fundamental opposition—namely, that between the organism of the potencies as the figure of being ($-A +A \pm A$) and that which *is* the potencies, i.e., that which *is* being (A^0).[36] Neither of these shifts occurs abruptly, but already in Munich the direction taken by Schelling is clear—and one that will reach full clarity in the *Presentation of the Purely Rational Philosophy*. Before turning to Schelling's final major work, however, I will offer a brief sketch of how this shift takes shape in Munich, and of the innovations it brings to his earlier characterization of divine life.

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[33] F.W.J. Schelling, *Über die Natur der Philosophie als Wissenschaft*.

[34] See Manfred Durner, *Wissen und Geschichte bei Schelling: Eine Interpretation der ersten Erlanger Vorlesung* (Munich: Berchmans, 1999).

[35] Several interpreters, with whom we agree, have identified the *Erlangen Lectures* as the moment of greatest affinity with Hegel's thought. See Walter Kasper, "The Absolute in History: The Philosophy and Theology of History in Schelling's Late Philosophy," trans. by Sr. Katherine Wolff, *The Collected Works of Walter Kasper* (New York: Paulist Press, 2018), 107–111; Francesco Tomatis, *Kenosis del logos. Ragione e rivelazione nell'ultimo Schelling* (Rome: Città Nuova, 1994), 83–116. A more radical attempt to replace being with freedom as the original principle was made in twentieth-century Italy by Luigi Pareyson in *Ontologia della libertà* (Turin: Einaudi, 1995). For a comparative analysis of the two thinkers, see the recent volume by Silvia Pogliano, *Der andersartige Anfang. Grund und Freiheit bei Schelling und Pareyson. Mit der deutschen Übersetzung eines Aufsatzes aus Pareysons "Ontologia della libertà" (1991)*, (Baden-Baden: Karl Alber Verlag, 2022).

[36] See Giusi Strummiello, *L'idea rovesciata: Schelling e l'ontoteologia* (Bari: Edizioni di Pagina, 2004), 32.

In Munich, Schelling seeks to affirm a certain "beyondness" of God with respect to being, i.e., to the potencies, and this leads to at least a partial rethinking of his earlier conception. In the *Stuttgart Seminars*, Schelling had conceived divine life as a progressive ascent from darkness to clarity, from unconsciousness to awareness, from ground to personality. In this account, God's awareness, thus His capacity to relate to Himself freely, develops simultaneously with His very life. The previously cited diary passage made it clear that "we cannot think of God apart from this movement, as if He were first for Himself and then entered into this movement."[37] In other words, God coincides with the movement of the potencies; He is not something separate that happens to enter into this movement, but is flattened onto the movement itself.

In Munich, by contrast—particularly in the *Presentation of Philosophical Empiricism*—Schelling aims to introduce a breach between God as such and the movement of the potencies in which He manifests Himself. Once the conception of God as "the Lord of being + *being itself*" is established, Schelling's new move—one that defines the entire speculative trajectory of the *Presentation*—is the attempt to liberate God as Lord of being (i.e., Lord of the potencies) from being as His eternal and necessary correlate (i.e., from the potencies).

Schelling begins by observing that God's life does not consist in the movement of the potencies as such, but rather in the act that passes through the three potencies, in the indivisible unity of the process that sets them in motion:

> Thus we have here three forms of divine being (des göttlichen Seyns). God is 1) B or the blind being (Seyn), 2) the one who negates this blind being, 3) the one posited as spirit. Now, God is not one of these forms *in particular* or exclusively or apart from the others—but God is only the actus passing through these three forms, the indissoluble unity of the process passing through these three forms. From this it follows, conversely, that B or the cosmic principle is not to be called God, for God is only the unity that operates in the three forms and subsists as indissoluble; neither B, nor that which negates it, nor that which is now posited as spirit is therefore God, but the indissoluble life in these three forms. (SW X, 276)[38]

But this is still not sufficient to guarantee a genuine beyondness of God with respect to the potencies, since the act that passes through the potencies

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[37] Schelling, *Philosophische Entwürfe und Tagebücher 1814–1816*, 7.
[38] F.W.J. Schelling, *Darstellung des philosophischen Empirismus,* SW 10: 225–286.

remains indissolubly bound to the potencies themselves. If the attempt to free God from being were to stop here, then the same equiprimordiality that, in the Freedom Essay, held between the ground of existence and that-which-exists would hold between God in Himself and the three forms of divine being. On the final page of the *Presentation of Philosophical Empiricism*, however, Schelling takes a step further and clarifies that "the potencies cannot be consequences of the divine *concept*, but only of the divine will" (SW X, 286).[39] The concept of God, then, appears to be posited as independent of the potencies themselves, and His will as absolutely prior to them.

In the Munich writings—including the various *Nachschriften* (transcripts) and the treatise on *Monotheism*, which was at least partially composed during those years—Schelling often oscillates and does not reach a clear position on this issue. What matters for our purposes, however, is that the earlier emphasis on life and on its three defining features (equiprimordiality, struggle, development) gradually fades in favor of a conception of God as spirit, free from being and towards being. Equiprimordiality, struggle, and development remain fundamental features for describing the dynamics of the potencies, but Schelling's effort is now directed toward a conception of God as independent from and ontologically prior to the potencies themselves. This trajectory finds its completion in the *Presentation of the Purely Rational Philosophy*, to which we now turn our attention.

Life as Individuality and ἐνέργεια (enérgeia)

The major innovation of the *Presentation of the Purely Rational Philosophy* is Schelling's engagement with Kant's doctrine of the transcendental ideal of pure reason. Positioned at the culmination of the Transcendental Dialectic, this doctrine marks the point at which Kant addresses the traditional concept of God in rational theology, i.e., the *ens realissimum* (the most real being). It is not possible here to dwell in detail on this doctrine or on the systematic role it assumes within the *Presentation*.[40] It is clear, however, that Schelling's decision to begin from this doctrine implies a deliberate return—nearly forty years after

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[39] Schelling, *Darstellung des philosophischen Empirismus.*

[40] See Wolfram Hogrebe, *Predication and Genesis: Metaphysics as Fundamental Heuristic after Schelling's* The Ages of the World, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant and Jason M. Wirth (Edinburgh University Press, 2024), 52–63; Daniel Sollberger, *Metaphysik und Invention: Die Wirklichkeit in den Suchbewegungen negativen und positiven Denkens in Schellings Spätphilosophie* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1996), 177–183; Markus Gabriel, *Der Mensch im Mythos: Untersuchungen über Ontotheologie, Anthropologie und Selbstbewußtseinsgeschichte in Schellings* Philosophie der Mythologie (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006), 105–116; Thomas Buchheim and Friedrich Hermanni, "Werkkomplex Berlin: Die Gestalt und Schwierigkeiten des späten Systems," *Schelling Handbuch: Leben—Werk—Wirkung*, ed. Paul Ziche (Stuttgart: Metzler, forthcoming).

the *Monument to Jacobi*—to a confrontation with the metaphysics of classical theism. Now, however, unlike in the earlier controversy with Jacobi, Schelling can rely on a powerful ally: Aristotle. Let us now briefly examine how Schelling draws on Kant's doctrine and the role Aristotle plays in his development of a new concept of life.

In discussing the ideal of pure reason, Kant distinguishes between the idea of *omnitudo realitatis*, i.e., the totality of all possibility (*Inbegriffe aller Möglichkeit*), and the ideal, namely "the idea not merely *in concreto*, but *in individuo*, i.e., as an individual thing which is determinable, or even determined, through the idea alone."[41] The ideal of pure reason—that individual being which is fully determined with respect to all possible opposed predicates, such that only those predicates that absolutely belong to being are encountered in its determination—coincides, according to Kant, with the *ens realissimum* (the most real being) of the metaphysical tradition.

The distinction between the idea as the sum of all possible universal predicates and the ideal as an individual being constitutes the starting point from which, as Marcela García puts it, Schelling develops a dual concept of God.[42] A first concept of God, corresponding to Kant's idea, is God as being (*das Seyende*), that is, as the totality of possible contents of thought (*omnitudo realitatis*; the totality of all possibilities); a second concept, corresponding to Kant's ideal, is God as that which is being (*das, was das Seyende ist*), that is, an individual actuality that actualizes the o*mnitudo realitatis* (the totality of all possibilities), but also possesses an individual being of its own. God as being coincides with the organism of the potencies (–A +A ±A), whereas God as individual actuality is that which actualizes them (A^0), even though His being is not exhausted in simply being-being.[43]

The entire *Presentation* consists in the attempt to separate these two concepts of God from one another. Starting from God as universal concept (–A +A ±A), Schelling aims to ascend to God as individual actuality (A^0). What is particularly relevant to our discussion of the dichotomy between life and

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[41] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 551: A568/B596.

[42] Marcela García, *The Significance of Aristotle in Schelling's Last Philosophy*, (München-Pamplona: Diss., 2008), 25–99.

[43] A detailed reconstruction of the doctrine of the potencies cannot be undertaken here; excellent accounts are provided by Hermann Schrödter, "Die Grundlagen der Lehre Schellings von den Potenzen in seiner Reinrationalen Philosophie," *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 40 (1986): 562–585; Hogrebe, *Predication and Genesis*, 63–69; Thomas Buchheim, *Eins von Allem. Die Selbstbescheidung des Idealismus in Schellings Spätphilosophie* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1992), 116–135; Edward A. Beach, *The Potencies of God(s): Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 111–146; Anna L. Müller-Bergen, "Schellings Potenzenlehre der negativen Philosophie oder die zur Wissenschaft erhobene Kritik der reinen Vernunft," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 113 (2006): 271–295.

being in the characterization of God is that, in addressing the relation between these two concepts of God, Schelling assigns to individual actuality a certain ontological priority and beyondness with respect to the organism of the potencies, i.e., to the rational structure intrinsic to being: "For the totality of possibilities (the figure of being), as the absolutely universal, cannot be itself; it needs one (*Eines*) in which, as something selfless, it has its self, one which for it, as something not self-being, is the cause of being, αἰτία τοῦ εἶναι, as Aristotle puts it" (SW XI: 313).[44] But the being of A^0 is not exhausted in being the cause of the being of –A +A ±A; on the contrary, "it itself (in itself) is nothing universal (no *what*), but an actuality surpassing all thought, so much so that, against this, its being-being [*sein das-Seyende-seyn*] appears only as something subsequent, something that merely happens to it (συμβεβηκός; symbebēkós; accident, something added to it" (SW XI: 314).[45] A^0 thus possesses a being of its own, in relation to which its being-being is something that simply comes afterward. However, one must avoid thinking of A^0 as an indeterminate *actus essendi*, which—if the metaphor may be allowed—is like a torrent of pure actuality ready to actualize any essence or potency whatsoever. Following Aristotle, rather, Schelling is adamant that that which is being is something purely individual; it "cannot even be *the One* (*das Eine*) [Spinoza's and Lessing's ἓν καὶ πᾶν; hèn kaì pân; one and all], but just *one* (*Eines*), Ἕν τι [hén ti; a one], which for Aristotle means the same as that which is a *this* (a τὸδε τι ὅν; tóde ti ón; this determinate being) and that which is able to be-for-itself, the χωριστόν (chōristón; the separate)" (SW XI: 314).[46]

The Aristotelian category of individuality thus constitutes the tool through which Schelling removes God from the necessitating web of being and of reason understood as *omnitudo realitatis* (the totality of possibilities). It is a necessary precondition for conceiving God's life as freedom from being. It is true, on the other hand, that already in the *Stuttgart Seminars* Schelling had expressed this conviction when addressing the distinction between the dogmatic view, according to which "God is conceived of as a particular, isolated, individual being (*Wesen*) that subsists entirely for itself," and the pantheist view, which "dissolves Him in a universal substance that is merely the vehicle of things" (SW VII: 438).[47] In 1810, Schelling believed he could resolve this contradiction through his theory of the two principles: just as the real principle is the ground of the ideal principle, so the dogmatic conception, which grants God an individual and separate existence, must necessarily be posited as the ground of the pantheistic conception: "God in His highest dignity is the universal being (*Wesen*) of all things, yet this universal being does

[44] F.W.J. Schelling, *Darstellung der reinrationalen Philosophie*.
[45] Schelling, *Darstellung der reinrationalen Philosophie*, SW XI: 253–572.
[46] Schelling, *Darstellung der reinrationalen Philosophie*.
[47] Schelling, "Stuttgart Seminars," 210.

not float in the air but rather is grounded in, as it were supported by, God as an *individual* being—*the individual in God is thus the basis or foundation of the universal*" (SW VII: 438).[48] In a certain sense, then, the dialectic between A^0 and –A +A ±A appears to reprise, at a higher level, the middle Schelling's dialectic between the ground of existence and that-which-exists. However, the terms of this new dialectic are quite different: A^0 is not a mere ground, tool, or *conditio sine qua non* of what exists, but is in every respect the cause of being (αἰτία τοῦ εἶναι) of the potencies—thus ontologically autonomous and prior to the potencies themselves.[49]

The second fundamental category for characterizing A^0 is that of actuality. Here too, Schelling draws heavily on Aristotle, whom he interprets and employs in an explicitly anti-Hegelian direction. The key notion Schelling recovers from Aristotle is that of ἐνέργεια (enérgeia; activity), that is, actuality as activity. As Marcela García has perceptively shown, the Aristotelian notion of ἐνέργεια (enérgeia) is not assimilable either to Kant's category of existence or to the ἐντελέχεια (entelécheia; actualization of something potential) that interests Hegel, since both of those notions imply a relation to potentiality and universality.[50] In Book Θ of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle clearly distinguishes between movement (κίνησις; kínēsis; motion) and activity (ἐνέργεια, enérgeia).[51] Movement is an action teleologically directed toward an external end, and it involves a transition from potentiality to actuality. Movement has a beginning, a duration, and an end, which is reached when the τέλος of the movement is fulfilled. Aristotle gives the example of losing weight: slimming down is not a process complete in itself, since it ends once one has actually become thin. By contrast, activity is an action that contains its own end, and is therefore complete in every moment it occurs; it is perfect in its very exercise. What is crucial for our discussion is that Aristotle includes living among the activities, not among the movements. In other words, for Aristotle, life is not a development from an imperfect to a perfect form—as Schelling had theorized in the 1809–1815 period—but is an activity already perfect in itself. In light of this conception of life, Aristotle could affirm, in Book Λ of the *Metaphysics*: "life belongs to God. For the actuality of thought is life, and God is that

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[48] Schelling, "Stuttgart Seminars," 210.

[49] In this shift, one cannot help but notice a movement toward the position advocated by Jacobi at the time of the *Theismusstreit*: God is not merely a ground, but a cause. Jacobi's criticisms—despite Schelling's immediate and vehement reply—had a long-term influence on Schelling's speculative journey. See Sean McGrath, "The Jacobi-Schelling Debate," *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi and the Ends of Enlightenment: Religion, Philosophy, and Reason at the Crux of Modernity*, ed. Alexander J.B. Hampton (Cambridge University Press, 2023), 104–123.

[50] Marcela García, "Energeia vs. Entelecheia: Schelling on Metaphysics Lambda and the Problem of the Pure Daß," *Tópicos. Revista de Filosofía* 51:2 (2016): 113–137.

[51] See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Θ 6, 1048b, 18–34. See García, *The Significance of Aristotle in Schelling's Last Philosophy*, 287–290.

actuality; and the essential actuality of God is life most good and eternal. We hold, then, that God is a living being, eternal, most good; and therefore life and a continuous eternal existence belong to God; for that is what God is."[52]

Schelling, by explicitly stating that he conceives of A^0 as ἐνέργεια (enérgeia; activity) and not as ἐντελέχεια (entelécheia; actualization of something potential) (see SW IX: 412), appears to fully embrace the Aristotelian perspective on this point. The notion of ἐνέργεια (enérgeia) indeed proves to be a powerful tool for revisiting the controversy with Jacobi and for conceiving a living God who, as pure actuality devoid of any potentiality, is from the very beginning complete in Himself.

Asymmetrical Coalition and Positive Philosophy

With the Aristotelian turn of the *Presentation*, then, Schelling appears to abandon the evolutionary account of God characteristic of his middle speculation and to return to positions more aligned with classical theism. But is this really the case? To answer this question, it is necessary to broaden the scope of our inquiry in two successive steps. First, after following the path by which, in the *Presentation*, Schelling radically separates God's individual actuality from the organism of the potencies, we must examine the essay *On the Source of Eternal Truths*, in which Schelling acknowledges that he cannot avoid reestablishing a connection between the two. Second, it is essential to recognize that the philosophical endeavor of the late Schelling is not limited to purely rational philosophy; it is accompanied by positive philosophy, in which Schelling, by inquiring into the relationship between God and history and into the manner in which God reveals Himself within it, reintroduces his evolutionary account of God.

Let us begin with the first point. In *On the Source of Eternal Truths*, Schelling seeks to answer the question he posed in the final pages of the *Presentation*: "how is it possible that –A +A ±A could be the consequence of A^0?" (SW XI: 570).[53] In other words, Schelling is asking how it is possible that the intrinsic rational structure of universal being stems from God understood as individual actuality. The solution Schelling proposes must meet a twofold requirement. On the one hand, A^0 must remain free with respect to –A +A ±A; otherwise, this would mean abandoning God's beyondness with respect to the potencies and thus contradicting His characterization as pure ἐνέργεια (enérgeia; activity). On the other hand, however, the necessity of the

[52] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Λ 7, 1072b, 27–30; trans. Hugh Tredennick (Harvard University Press, 1996).
[53] F.W.J. Schelling, "Presentation of the Purely Rational Philosophy," trans. Kyla Bruff, *Kabiri* 2 (2020): 93–135, here 134.

connection between A^0 and –A +A ±A must also be preserved, because—as Aristotle teaches—*de singularibus non est scientia* (there is no science of singulars). To sever the link between God and being, between God and reason, would be to condemn ourselves to the impossibility of knowing God and thus to collapse (this time entirely!) into Jacobi's position, according to which "God cannot be known, but only believed."[54]

The strategy adopted by Schelling to resolve this dilemma once again draws from Aristotelian ontology. Being-being, being the cause of the being of –A +A ±A, is not an essential predicate of A^0, but a necessary accident—"a συμβεβηκός [symbebēkós; accident] in the Aristotelian sense, though a necessary one" (SW XI: 588). More precisely, the Aristotelian notion to which Schelling implicitly seems to refer is that of ἴδιον (ídion; property; *proprium*): just as laughter is a *proprium* of the human being, being-being is a *proprium* of God. As Thomas Buchheim and Friedrich Hermanni put it, Schelling theorizes an "asymmetrical coalition"[55] between A^0 and –A +A ±A. As two members of a coalition, A^0 and –A +A ±A are neither reducible to nor deducible from one another. Nevertheless, insofar as this coalition is asymmetrical, A^0 holds a priority over –A +A ±A:

> The path does not go from the universal to the individual …. What one should say, rather, is that the individual (*das Individuelle*)—and indeed, especially what is the individual in the highest sense— realizes itself, i.e., makes itself intelligible, or enters the sphere of reason and knowledge, inasmuch as it generalizes itself, or makes the universal, *all*-comprehending essence its own, clothes itself with it. (SW XI: 587–588)[56]

What is most relevant to our discussion, however, is that Schelling affirms the necessity of the connection between the two members of the coalition. As we have seen, this connection does not arise from any feature of the two members themselves, which taken individually would be entirely unrelated, but from the overarching necessity "of the being-one (*Eins-seyn*) of thought and being," from the supreme law which asserts that "whatever *Is* must also have a relation to the *concept*" (SW XI: 587).[57] A^0, too, to realize itself, must therefore enter into a relation with –A +A ±A, and must submit to the dialectic of the

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[54] Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, "Jacobi to Fichte," *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, trans. George di Giovanni (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 497–536, here 500.
[55] Buchheim and Hermanni, "Werkkomplex Berlin".
[56] F.W.J. Schelling, "On the Source of the Eternal Truths," trans. Edward A. Beach, *The Owl of Minerva*, 22:1 (1990): 55–67, here 65–66.
[57] Schelling, "On the Source of the Eternal Truths," 65.

potencies that articulates the inner life of God as a development. The asymmetrical coalition between A^0 and $-A +A \pm A$, replacing the earlier model of equiprimordiality between the ground of existence and that-which-exists, allows—at least in principle—for a reconciliation between the theistic conception of God as an absolutely separate individual, pure act, and complete in Himself, and the evolutionary account of God shaped by the potencies. Unlike what we find in the Freedom Essay, where the life of God controversially begins from "the yearning the eternal One feels to give birth to itself" (SW VII: 359),[58] here it is individual actuality—already self-subsisting—that undergoes the movement of the potencies. The life of God unfolds within something that is already eternally in act: namely, A^0.

Purely rational philosophy has reached the conclusion that God, in order to be the principle, must be an individual actuality. However, it stops there, without inquiring into what it truly means to exist as individual actuality.[59] This task is entrusted to positive philosophy, the systematic domain in which Schelling most fully recovers his deeply Christian, though seemingly anti-metaphysical (at least in the classical sense), idea of a God whose life has the greatest analogy with human life. As Walter Kasper argues, positive philosophy is guided by the conviction that "true history is possible only when it also means something for God";[60] a history that left God untouched and unaffected would be nothing more than an eternal circle, in which nothing new or meaningful ever occurs. Here, unfortunately, we cannot even sketch the contours of Schelling's positive philosophy. However, it is enough to recall the emphasis he places on the historicity of the event of the Incarnation, and on the necessity of historical temporality for the unfolding of the Christian Trinity and the full personalization of the divine persons, as well as for the entire historical ecclesiology developed at the end of the *Philosophy of Revelation*, to realize that Schelling did not entirely abandon some of the core theses of his middle philosophy. History is not merely the site of the revelation of God, but the stage of an authentic trinitarian theo-drama, whose outcome is not guaranteed from the beginning, but hinges upon the freedom of human beings and of the divine persons themselves.

Schelling, then, did not abandon the purpose that had guided his middle philosophy—namely, the attempt to reconcile the metaphysical and the religious conceptions of God by developing a living system of narrative philosophy. However, the increasingly critical vocation of his philosophy made it clear to him that the philosophical enterprise had to be divided into two distinct movements. In his late philosophy, Schelling comes to see that only by, so to speak, loosening the structure of the system can its collapse be

[58] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 28.
[59] See García, *The Significance of Aristotle in Schelling's Last Philosophy*, 321–323.
[60] Kasper, *The Absolute in History*, 345.

avoided. Only by distinguishing between negative and positive philosophy, and by entrusting the transition from the former to the latter—not to an internal logical coherence but to a decision of freedom—can a theoretically sustainable reconciliation between the metaphysical and religious conceptions of God be achieved, one that allows both to subsist in their irreducible distinctiveness, like the two foci of a single ellipse.

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Schelling on Reason, Revelation, and the Moons of Jupiter

Mark J. Thomas

At various points in his long career, Schelling affirms central doctrines of Christianity while claiming to do philosophy. For example, in the 1809 treatise on freedom he makes fairly explicit references to the Incarnation: "For only what is personal can heal what is personal, and God must become man so that man returns to God" (SW VII: 380).[1] In the same text, the Fall of man and the consequences of sin figure prominently, with Trinitarian language sprinkled throughout the work.[2] Of course, Schelling's treatment of Christian doctrine reaches its culmination decades later in his lectures on the philosophy of revelation, both in Munich and Berlin. There he discusses the full range of Christian beliefs—from the pre-existence of Christ as the divine *logos*, to his becoming flesh as the man Jesus of Nazareth, to his death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. Moreover, Schelling's manner of treating these doctrines implies that they are literally true, not just symbolic representations of philosophical insight.

Now, such a philosophical treatment of Christian doctrine is controversial—both then and now. Already in the 1830s Heinrich Heine accused Schelling of reverting to the religious orthodoxy he had rejected in his youth: "The same man who once expressed most boldly the religion of

[1] Unless otherwise indicated, translations from German texts are my own.

[2] For example, see SW VII: 361. On Schelling's use of Trinitarian language in the 1809 treatise, see Christian Brouwer, *Schellings Freiheitsschrift: Studien zu ihrer Interpretation und ihrer Bedeutung für die theologische Diskussion* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 171-75.

pantheism…[has] slipped back into yesterday's stables of belief."[3] And after attending the lectures in Berlin, Friedrich Engels wrote a satirical pamphlet, dismissing Schelling as "the philosopher in Christ."[4] For his part, Schelling clearly recognizes the controversial aspect of what he is doing. In the Berlin lectures, he acknowledges that some of his audience may be turned off by his line of inquiry (SW XIII: 143), and at times he comes off as rather defensive about its philosophical legitimacy (SW XIV: 80).

But why exactly is it controversial for philosophy to deal with Christian doctrine? It is true, of course, that philosophy has a long tradition of engaging with topics that overlap with religious faith—for example, the existence of God and the problem of evil. But those overlapping topics are only admitted within philosophy to the extent that they can be known through reason alone. In the case of doctrines like the Incarnation, however, reason alone cannot establish their truth—something that Schelling himself admits. How, then, can Schelling incorporate doctrines like the Incarnation into his philosophy? Don't these doctrines presuppose faith in a particular form of revelation, thus going beyond what is philosophically knowable?

In this article, I propose to critically examine Schelling's answer to these questions and, more generally, the relationship between reason and revelation in his late philosophy. Schelling's understanding of that relationship is enormously innovative but also complex. To help navigate the complexity, I would like to focus on a remarkable analogy that Schelling introduces in his 1842-43 lectures: knowing the truths of revelation is like seeing the moons of the planet Jupiter. That analogy will provide a framework for filling in the details of Schelling's account; along the way I will place it in historical context and in relation to alternative approaches.

My main interpretative claim is this: Schelling stakes out a position on revelation that is unique in the history of philosophy insofar as he makes revelation both essential and unessential for true philosophy. We will see what that means more concretely when working through the analogy with Jupiter's moons. But already in this paradoxical formulation, we can observe a fundamental tension in Schelling's approach to revelation—a tension that has largely been neglected in Schelling scholarship.[5] So, beyond arguing for my

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[3] Heinrich Heine, *On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany*, ed. Terry Pinkard, trans. Howard Pollack-Milgate (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 111.

[4] Friedrich Engels, *Schelling, der Philosoph in Christo, oder die Verklärung der Weltweisheit zur Gottesweisheit* (Berlin: A. Eyssenhardt, 1842). Heine and Engels are both cited in Christian Danz, *Die philosophische Christologie F.W.J. Schellings* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1996), 11.

[5] Christian Danz has perhaps the best analysis of Schelling's method in the philosophy of revelation, but (in my view) he neglects this tension and does not discuss the moons analogy. *Die philosophische Christologie F.W.J. Schellings*, 20-37. See also Sean J. McGrath, *The Philosophical Foundations of the Late Schelling: The Turn to the Positive* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press,

interpretive claim, I would like to pose critical questions about Schelling's position that arise out of that fundamental tension. In particular, I would like to ask whether, despite Schelling's claims, his approach presupposes a faith commitment—and thus whether his philosophy of revelation would be more accurately labeled "philosophical theology" rather than philosophy.

The Analogy with Jupiter's Moons

The analogy appears in the 1842-43 Berlin lectures *Introduction to the Philosophy of Revelation: Grounding of Positive Philosophy*. In the seventh lecture, Schelling discusses various misunderstandings of his philosophy of revelation and attempts to define more precisely the role that revelation plays. He adamantly rejects the notion that his philosophy would rely on revelation as an authority. To illustrate philosophy's independence from all authority, including the authority of revelation, he draws an analogy. For people with normal eyesight, the four moons of Jupiter are only visible when using a telescope. However, there are some people with extraordinary vision who can see the moons with the naked eye—but only after they have used the telescope to spot the moons first. The telescope is both essential and unessential for seeing the moons: it is essential in the sense that without a telescope, no one could see the moons in the first place; but, ultimately, it is unessential for those who can dispense with the telescope and see with their own eyes (SW XIII: 137).

Now, Schelling contends that this is precisely the situation with revelation. There are many things that philosophy would not know without revelation: it is philosophy's telescope. But he adds: philosophy "can now see these objects with its own eyes" (SW XIII: 137). In fact, if philosophy is to remain true to its nature, it *has to* see these objects with its own eyes—that is, its knowledge of revealed truths must become fully independent of the authority of revelation. Thus, revelation is both essential and unessential for philosophy. It is *essential* in the sense that philosophy is unable to know decisive facts about reality without revelation—and thus any philosophy that does not take revelation into account is incomplete. But it is ultimately *unessential*, because philosophy can and should dispense with revelation and stand on its own.

Before continuing, let me briefly add some background details, which I think reveal additional layers to Schelling's analogy. Famously, the discoverer of Jupiter's four largest moons was Galileo. With the aid of a new telescope he had just designed, Galileo was the first human being to observe three of

2021), 170-80. For an overview of Schelling's positions on religion throughout his career, see Christian Danz, "Schellings Religionsphilosophie. Einleitung," in *Religionsphilosophie nach Schelling: Mythos und Offenbarung*, ed. Christian Danz (Berlin: J.B. Metzler, 2024), 1-7.

Jupiter's moons on the night of January 7, 1610. It took another week for him to spot a fourth. We now know them as the Galilean moons: Io, Europa, Ganymede, and Callisto. In fact, these are only the four largest of Jupiter's moons. (The total number currently recognized by the International Astronomical Union is 97![6]) What's remarkable is that Galileo did not realize at first that he was observing moons—that is, satellites orbiting Jupiter. He initially refers to them as "fixed stars." Only with repeated observations with his telescope over several days did he realize they were revolving around the planet.[7] In other words, it is possible to see the moons without seeing them *as* moons. We should keep that in mind as we think about the application to revelation: even if philosophy can see revealed truths on its own, does it still rely on revelation to see these truths for what they really are?[8]

I should also note that some scientists regard with suspicion claims of seeing Jupiter's moons with the naked eye. It is a challenging feat because Jupiter's glare interferes with our vision, and thus it can only be done under ideal conditions with extraordinary eyesight.[9] So, many of the claims may be fraudulent or the product of wishful thinking. Interestingly, Schelling himself vouches for the truth of one specific case: he knew a woman who, in the presence of an astronomer and a physicist, demonstrated her ability to observe the precise positions of the moons (SW XIII: 137). In any event, we should note the same possibility for suspicion in the case of revelation: someone—perhaps even Schelling—might believe they know revealed truths through purely philosophical means but not really do so.

Finally, the analogy raises an important question that Schelling does not explicitly address in this passage. If it is truly possible to see the moons of Jupiter with the naked eye, why was it necessary to discover them with a telescope first? Couldn't someone have—at least in principle—discovered the moons with the naked eye before Galileo? In fact, it is now claimed that the ancient Chinese astronomer Gan De observed one of the moons in the fourth century BC, two thousand years before Galileo.[10] However, he did not recognize that what he was seeing was a *moon* orbiting the planet—he thought it was an accompanying star. This suggests two reasons why no one discovered

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[6] "Planetary Satellite Discovery Circumstances," NASA, updated May 23, 2023, https://ssd.jpl.nasa.gov/sats/discovery.html.

[7] For a full account of Galileo's discovery, see Stillman Drake, *Galileo at Work: His Scientific Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 146-54.

[8] Schelling himself seems to hint at this possibility: "And likewise philosophy would certainly not have known many things without revelation, at least not *in this way* [*wenigstens nicht so erkannt haben*]" (SW XIII: 137, emphasis added).

[9] Clark Muir, "Glimpsing Jupiter's Moons with the Naked Eye," *Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada* 104, no. 3 (June 2010): 101-2.

[10] Xi Ze-zong, "The Sighting of Jupiter's Satellite by Gan De 2000 Years before Galileo," *Chinese Astronomy and Astrophysics* 5 (1981): 242-43.

the moons before the telescope's invention: First, one needs the precise observations of the telescope over several days to recognize that what one is looking at is really a moon and not a star. Second, even spotting the appearance of one of the moons as a star-like phenomenon is extremely unlikely (since we only know of one example before Galileo). Someone with extraordinary eyesight has to direct their attention to precisely the right place at precisely the right time—like finding a needle in a haystack without knowing you are looking for a needle. Once the moons have been discovered with a telescope, however, you know where to look with the expectation you might see something. Applying this to revelation, we could say that revelation has the function of directing our attention to truths we would never have looked for without revelation.

Still, it is curious that Schelling contends several times that philosophy *couldn't* know revealed truths without revelation—especially if philosophy can ultimately know these truths on its own. He might have written that it is extremely unlikely but not impossible, just as it was extremely unlikely that someone like Gan De would spot one of Jupiter's moons. We will have to come back to the reasons why it is impossible.

New Parameters for Combining Philosophy and Revelation

Somewhat later in the same Berlin lectures, Schelling formulates what he calls a "first principle" for combining philosophy and revelation: they should not be combined "at the cost of either philosophy or revelation" (SW XIII: 142). In other words, one needs to respect the essential character of both and not compromise what makes them distinctive. We have already seen this principle applied on the philosophy side: Schelling insists that it cannot rely on external authority and remain philosophy. In other words, *Selbstdenken* or intellectual autonomy is essential to the philosophical enterprise. But the principle applies equally to revelation. When treating revelation philosophically, it is a mistake to leave out or explain away the very things that make it distinctive as revelation.

Here Schelling is critiquing the attempts of previous philosophers to deal with religion. They go wrong in one of two overlapping ways. First, they attempt to reduce religious beliefs to "truths of reason" (SW XIV: 4-5). This is one of the major Enlightenment tendencies in dealing with religion. According to this approach, everything that is true in religion can be known through reason alone—mostly moral truths and general claims about God's existence and nature. The supernatural and historical elements are figurative clothing that is ultimately unessential. The task, then, is to demythologize and dehistoricize religion—interpreting away the supernatural and historical

elements so that we are left with the rational core, which is "religion within the limits of reason alone" (to use Kant's title). Schelling rejects this reason-bound approach to religion, which he sometimes labels "Vernunftreligion" (SW XIII: 194). He even says that Kant's *Religion* treatise and Fichte's *Critique of All Revelation* are "the furthest possible from the kingdom of God" (SW XIV: 18). According to Schelling, revelation is only meaningful as a concept if it contains elements that go beyond reason (SW XIII: 142-43). In particular, the historical dimension is essential to what revelation is: "The true content of Christianity is a history in which the divine is interwoven—a divine history" (SW XIII: 195).

The second way philosophy can go wrong is by reading itself into religion. In other words, one begins with an already established philosophy and then interprets revelation to fit that philosophy. This was where the scholastic approach to theology went wrong, applying (Aristotelian) concepts that were alien to the truths of revelation (SW XIV: 31).[11] I suspect that Schelling also has Hegel in mind, since Hegel famously views religion as expressing philosophical truth (that is, Hegel's own philosophy) in the form of *Vorstellung* or representation.[12] Against this tendency to make revelation conform to philosophy, Schelling hints at what makes his own approach so distinctive. The question we have to ask is "what kind of philosophy is needed…to be able to comprehend Christianity?" (SW XIV: 34). This means that Christian revelation places a demand on philosophy; it calls for a new kind of philosophy. More on that later.

Thus far, it is clear that Schelling intends to break decisively with previous German philosophy of religion. But there is one German thinker to whom Schelling remains deeply indebted in his approach to revelation: Lessing. In the 1780 essay "The Education of the Human Race," Lessing presents revelation as God's means of teaching humanity things we humans can eventually know on our own. Like any good teacher, God does not give his students the full truth all at once; instead, he unfolds his teaching gradually over the course of revelation history, guiding reason toward those truths that humanity is ready to learn at a particular stage of its development. At the end of the historical process, human beings can dispense with revelation and know the previously revealed truths through reason alone: "The development of

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[11] There is a clear echo here of Luther's critique of scholasticism: "No one can become a theologian unless he becomes one without Aristotle." "Disputation against Scholastic Theology," in *Luther's Works*, vol. 31, ed. Harold J. Grimm and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957), 12 (§44).

[12] As Peter Dews notes, we might well ask if this critique applies to Schelling himself and thus whether "Schelling is only taking out of the Christian revelation what he has read into it." *Schelling's Late Philosophy in Confrontation with Hegel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 231.

revealed truths into truths of reason is absolutely necessary if they are to be of any help to the human race."[13]

Lessing's essay was evidently quite formative for Schelling, since he cites it repeatedly over a period of fifty years.[14] At the end of the 1809 *Freiheitsschrift*, he even quotes the line about developing revealed truths into truths of reason (SW VII: 412). And at first glance, the dynamic between reason and revelation in Lessing seems very close to the analogy with Jupiter's moons. For Lessing, revelation also functions as a telescope, guiding us toward truths that we can subsequently know without the telescope: "When they were revealed, they were not yet truths of reason; but they were revealed in order to become such truths."[15]

Nonetheless, Schelling's position on revelation differs from Lessing's in two important respects. First, Lessing concedes that human beings *could* discover revealed truths by themselves, but revelation allows them to be acquired "more quickly and more easily."[16] In contrast, Schelling insists that we could not know revealed truths without revelation. This is what makes his position so distinctive in the history of philosophy: revelation is essential at first, but subsequently unessential when we come to see revealed truths on our own.[17]

Second, although Lessing emphasizes the historical unfolding of revelation, the content of revelation (what God gradually teaches) is ultimately ahistorical—the "necessary truths of reason." In this respect, Lessing is also advocating a form of *Vernunftreligion*, and thus neglecting the essentially historical content of revelation, from Schelling's perspective. Nevertheless, Lessing's notion that humanity can *outgrow* revelation has a clear echo in Schelling's insistence that philosophy can see revealed truths with its own eyes (discarding the telescope). And beyond that, it has an echo in Schelling's

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[13] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, "The Education of the Human Race," in *Philosophical and Theological Writings*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 236 (§76).

[14] SW I: 1, 4, 8; SW I: 477-78; SW V: 294; SW VII: 412; SW X: 404; SW XI: 83-84; SW XII: 179.

[15] Lessing, "The Education of the Human Race," 236 (§76).

[16] Lessing, "The Education of the Human Race," 218 (§4). Schelling may be criticizing this aspect of Lessing's position at SW XIV: 5, though Lessing is unnamed.

[17] One can also contrast Schelling's position with that of St. Thomas Aquinas. He differs from Schelling in holding that (1) not all revealed truths can be known through philosophy, and (2) certain revealed truths can be known by philosophy independent of revelation. It was necessary for God to reveal even the second category of truths because otherwise they would be "available only to a few people, after a long time, and with the admixture of many errors" (*Summa Theologiae* Ia, q. 1, a. 1, resp.). *Treatise on the Divine Nature*, trans. Brian Shanley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2006), 3.

sketches for a philosophical religion as a successor to revealed religion—one that requires consciousness to become "free from revelation" (SW XI: 258).[18]

Accessing Revelation: Faith vs. Historical Fact

If the distinctive character of revelation must be respected, as Schelling insists, what precisely does "revelation" refer to? The term has a long history in his philosophy. In earlier works, it had an extremely broad meaning: any means by which the divine essence is revealed is a form of revelation—including nature, history, and art. For example, at the end of the *Freiheitsschrift* Schelling proclaims: "We have a revelation older than any that is written: nature" (SW VII: 415).

In the philosophy of revelation, the meaning of the term is much more restricted, though Schelling has different ways of formulating it. In the second part of the Berlin lectures, he states directly that revelation is Christianity, and the true content of Christianity is the person of Christ: revelation is Christocentric (SW XIV: 35). Somewhat earlier he had noted that revelation in "the highest sense" is the revelation of the divine will (SW XIV: 10), in particular, the divine decision to save fallen humanity (SW XIV: 24). Finally, he says that the content of revelation is a "higher history" that extends from the beginning of things to their end (SW XIV: 30). I believe these meanings of revelation all hang together. The main elements of the Christian story (creation, fall, redemption) all involve Christ, through whom all things were made, and who became flesh to redeem humanity. Importantly, they also involve free decisions of the divine will—the will to create and the will to redeem.

If the content of revelation is the person of Christ, how do we gain initial access to that content? In other words, what exactly is the telescope that allows us to see the revealed truths of Christianity? This is perhaps the least developed aspect of Schelling's account. He rejects the obvious answer: faith. This rejection might seem surprising, since revelation and faith are typically so closely associated that we use the words interchangeably—to ask about the relationship between reason and revelation is to ask about the relationship between reason and faith. Indeed, one could imagine a variation on Schelling's position where faith would play a role. One could say, for example, that faith gives us initial access to the truths of revelation (this would be the telescope). However, once faith points out these truths, we can use philosophy to establish them independently of faith and thus see them with our own eyes. To use the Augustinian formula, *credo ut intelligam*: "I believe so that I might understand."

[18] I will return briefly to philosophical religion in the last section of the article.

This is essentially Étienne Gilson's conception of a Christian philosophy: using faith as a guide to what is true, but then seeking to know through purely philosophical means some of what one already believes through faith.[19]

Schelling, however, denies that faith has any significant role to play in his philosophy of revelation—at least not faith in the traditional sense: "The one who wants to believe and can do so, does not philosophize; the one who philosophizes announces thereby that mere faith does not suffice for him" (SW XIII: 135). Nonetheless, Schelling does allow for other, non-religious senses of faith to play a role. For example, he calls the state at the very end of the knowledge process "faith," since it involves a certainty that eliminates all doubt (SW XIV: 13-15).[20]

Why does Schelling reject any role for religious faith, even as an initial access point to revelation? In short, religious faith would treat revelation as an *authority*. But philosophy by its nature is incompatible with relying on external authority, since it requires "our own thinking" (SW XIII: 137) or intellectual autonomy as a truly free science. Schelling thus wants to distance himself from a "Christian philosophy" that would treat faith in revelation as a source or starting point (SW XIII: 133).[21] I suspect he is also keenly aware of critics who would pounce on any admission of religious faith as evidence that Schelling is no longer a true philosopher.

To be sure, the situation is a bit more complicated than the renunciation of external authority would suggest. In fact, Schelling concedes that a certain form of authority is involved: "Revelation will exercise no other authority over [philosophy] than that which every other object exercises over the science that deals with it" (SW XIII: 133). Natural science, for example, has to treat its object—the empirical facts about nature—as an authority with which it must align. Such is also the case for philosophy's treatment of revelation, which likewise presents "authoritative" facts, as we will see shortly. Interestingly, later in the same lectures Schelling notes that "any submission to authority" can be called *faith*. In fact, we only know through faith that an external world exists, since we must trust the authority of our senses (SW XIII: 171-72).[22] Schelling thus allows for faith in certain forms of external authority when doing philosophy—just not religious faith.

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[19] See Étienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy (Gifford Lectures 1931-1932)*, trans. A. H. C. Downes (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press), 1-41, esp. 36-37.

[20] For a discussion of the alternative senses of faith, see McGrath, *The Philosophical Foundations of the Late Schelling*, 170-80.

[21] Interestingly, Schelling had applied the name "Christian philosophy" to his own work in his 1827-28 Munich lectures. *System der Weltalter*, ed. Siegbert Peetz (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1998), 9.

[22] Schelling notes the origin of this idea in Johann Georg Hamann. See James C. O'Flaherty, *Hamann's Socratic Memorabilia: A Translation and Commentary* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1967), 166-67.

So, how do we know revelation if not through religious faith? Schelling's answer is simple—we might even say frustratingly simple: "Christianity is a fact that cannot be dismissed" (SW XIV: 234). By that he means that Christianity is a historical reality that everyone—even the most secular historian—must acknowledge. Indeed, he asks us to imagine someone who was raised as a strict rationalist and had never heard of Christianity. If such a rationalist were suddenly confronted with the historical appearance of Christianity in the world, that person would feel compelled to account for the phenomenon (SW XIV: 229). Along similar lines, Schelling notes that revelation is an actual fact that we encounter through experience, just like the phenomena of nature and other events in history (SW XIII: 133). And as a historical fact, Christianity has had enormous and undeniable effects, even shaping the present state of human consciousness (SW XIV: 19). Above all, Christianity effected what Schelling calls "the greatest of all revolutions"—the liberation of humanity from the darkness of the pagan world (SW XIV: 19-20).[23] In sum, Schelling insists that he is interested in Christianity as a fact (*Tatsache*), not a doctrine or teaching (*Lehre*) (SW XIV: 34).

Here one can certainly question Schelling's claim that he is merely attending to the objective phenomena from a faith-neutral perspective. It is undeniably true that the man Jesus of Nazareth actually lived, and that the movement he began eventually transformed the ancient world. But the details of Christ's life—especially his resurrection—are not undisputed historical events. Indeed, the historical reliability of the New Testament was the subject of the so-called Fragments Controversy involving Reimarus and Lessing a generation before Schelling.[24] To be sure, Schelling acknowledges the importance of historical critique of the scriptural sources (SW XIV: 33), and he claims to be drawing on the most reliable historical documents (*Urkunden*), just as he did when examining the myths about Dionysus (SW XIV: 201). He also claims that the *content* of the New Testament books authenticates them: we know they are authentic sources because their content has a necessary fit within the higher history traced by Schelling's positive philosophy (SW XIV: 318). Still, even if this authentication is possible, it certainly seems that

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[23] Schelling's claims about Christianity's role in liberating the world from paganism and shaping the current state of consciousness have striking parallels in the historian Tom Holland's much-discussed book *Dominion: How the Christian Revolution Remade the World* (New York: Basic Books, 2019). Holland's focus is on Christian moral values that were alien to pagan culture—especially, the intrinsic value given to the poor and the weak. Cf. this line from Schelling: "The proud power of paganism bowed down before the despised cross" (SW XIV: 19).

[24] See Frederick C. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 56-57.

Schelling is relying on his faith background in choosing which sources to examine.[25]

Moreover, it is not clear that Schelling's distinction between fact and doctrine holds up when we turn to the revealed truths he is most interested in. Above all, the Incarnation—the Word becoming flesh—involves an interpretation of who Christ is that is a matter of doctrine, not pure historical fact.[26] In any case, it seems to me that it would be in keeping with Schelling's overall approach if he were to admit his faith background plays an initial role in interpreting the historical facts, but that this is merely the telescope that can be discarded, if indeed philosophy can see these truths on its own.

The Need for Revelation and the Transformation of Philosophy

If philosophy can see revealed truths on its own, why is revelation necessary in the first place? The short answer is that revelation is above reason; it thus allows us to know things that are beyond our *ordinary* philosophical concepts. However, revelation also challenges philosophy to expand its concepts—to go beyond its current limits. And, presumably, this enhanced philosophy can see revealed truths with its own eyes, no longer needing revelation. So, we have a before-and-after story with respect to philosophy, just as we did with Galileo and the telescope. Before revelation (the telescope), philosophy is incapable of seeing these things on its own. But after revelation, they can be seen by a new, transformed philosophy—Schelling's positive philosophy.

Let me fill in some of the details. When Schelling says that revelation goes beyond reason, he is making two claims—one that is fairly modest, one that is more ambitious. On the modest side, he is claiming that revelation is a matter of experience, and all experience goes beyond reason (SW XIII: 143). Through experience we come to know about the actual existence of things, while reason is incapable of establishing actual existence—it remains within the realm of concepts. Schelling even points out that through pure reason we would not even know that actual plants exist in the world; we might have knowledge of the essence of plants, but not their existence (SW XIII: 171). So, revelation gives us experiential knowledge of facts about reality, and thus goes

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[25] For a more sympathetic discussion of Schelling's treatment of scripture, see Danz, *Die philosophische Christologie F.W.J. Schellings*, 34-37.

[26] Walter Kasper makes a similar point: "Revelation is certainly history, but a history that leads back into what is above history, the history of salvation. This aspect cannot simply be 'seen' in the historical fact….Thus, along with the historical act, there must be the Word that interprets and calls to decision." *The Absolute in History: The Philosophy and Theology of History in Schelling's Late Philosophy*, trans. Katherine E. Wolff (Mahway, NJ: Paulist Press, 2018), 209.

beyond what reason can establish conceptually. This is, of course, why the philosophy of revelation is part of Schelling's positive philosophy.

But Schelling is making a more ambitious claim as well. He quotes the famous line from *Hamlet*: "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy" (SW XIV: 19).[27] Revelation contains elements that go beyond reason in the sense that they are inconceivable in terms of human concepts and the philosophies derived from them. First and foremost, Schelling has in mind the acts of God: "God is greater than we think" (SW XIV: 14). He notes that, if divine actions were not revealed by actually becoming reality, they could never have come into the thought of any human being (SW XIV: 24). Indeed, from the standpoint of human judgment, the acts of God appear to be foolishness. But divine foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, in the words of St. Paul, whom Schelling quotes (SW XIV: 24).[28]

Of course, creation itself is a divine act that we only know from the experience that the world actually exists. Beyond that, Schelling notes God's apparently foolish decision to create a being—man—to whom he also gave the power to jeopardize his entire work through sin. And finally, there is the divine decision that Schelling singles out, since without revelation it is unknowable "in the most eminent sense." This is the decision to redeem fallen humanity through the Incarnation. Schelling adds that the revelation of God's will to redeem is "revelation in the highest sense" (SW XIV: 10; cf. SW XIV: 169).

Thus, we can identify two ways in which God's acts are unknowable apart from revelation. First, they are acts of freedom—creation and redemption are the result of the divine will. And if God's decisions are truly free, it is impossible to know a priori how those decisions will come out. We know them only a posteriori, through the execution of the divine will in the real world (SW XIV: 6-8). Second, as we have seen, the reasoning behind God's decisions defies our human way of thinking. We would never reason our way to those decisions ourselves.

But, even if God's decisions are above reason, Schelling insists that this does not mean the decisions are "incomprehensible" (*unbegreiflich*) (SW XIV: 24). To comprehend them, we have to expand our thought so that it reaches the level of divine thought (SW XIV: 12). As noted already, this places a demand on philosophy: a philosophical treatment of revelation requires "an expansion of philosophy beyond its current limits" (SW XIII: 145). And Schelling contends that only his positive philosophy is able to meet this demand. In fact, revelation's demand for a new kind of philosophy is—in his

[27] Act 1, Scene 5
[28] 1 Corinthians 1:25

view—confirmed by his previous critique of the inadequacies of negative philosophy (SW XIII: 145). In any case, once this expansion of philosophy is accomplished, it is the task of Schelling's philosophy of revelation to make revelation "comprehensible" (*begreiflich*) (SW XIII: 174; XIV: 28).

What does "making comprehensible" involve exactly? At least three things. First, it involves thinking of the grounds or motives (*Beweggründe*) for divine decisions that at first seem inscrutable (SW XIV: 12). For example, Schelling discusses the reasons motivating the divine decision to become flesh (the Incarnation): this was the only way to save a fallen humanity, making possible the free sacrifice of the Son that overcomes the will of the Father to punish mankind (SW XIV: 166-69). Second, "making comprehensible" involves showing how the "higher history" of revelation can be traced back to the principles of positive philosophy that Schelling had already established (SW XIV: 30). Each piece of the puzzle that revelation gives us fits with what came before and forms part of a coherent narrative. In this connection, Schelling refers to the "great universal context [*Zusammenhang*] in which this content [of revelation] is alone comprehensible" (SW XIII: 141). As the structure of Schelling's lectures makes clear, that context includes mythological religion, which precedes and sets the stage for revelation (SW XIV: 20; cf. XIII: 530). Finally, "making comprehensible" involves a unification (*Vereinigung*) of the various statements in scripture. The "true" system will be able to show how these statements cohere while staying faithful to their character—not reading into them something that isn't there (SW XIV: 33).[29]

As the last point makes clear, revelation not only has the function of transforming philosophy by challenging it to expand its concepts. It also has the function of *confirming* the true philosophy. Only the philosophy that can comprehend and explain revelation is fully adequate to reality. And Schelling, of course, claims this for his positive philosophy.

The Result: Autonomous Philosophy or Philosophical Theology?

Now we can circle back to the analogy with Jupiter's moons. The main point of the analogy is to insist on the possibility of philosophy seeing revealed truths for itself, fully independent of the revelation that had given it initial access to those truths—just as those with extraordinary sight can see the moons of Jupiter without a telescope. So, does Schelling's philosophy of revelation

[29] Though Schelling does not acknowledge it, the task of providing a coherent interpretation of scriptural statements presupposes the fundamental reliability—and thus authority—of scripture. And that presupposition is difficult to reconcile with Schelling's claim that the philosophy of revelation is based on undisputed historical facts, not on faith.

accomplish this? The answer to that question largely depends on the meaning of two verbs that occur again and again: *begreifen* and *erklären*—"comprehend" and "explain." The task of the philosophy of revelation is to comprehend revelation and to explain it.[30] The question is: is that comprehension and explanation so complete that they give us demonstrative knowledge—and thus certainty independent of revelation? Or is the comprehension only partial, involving some understanding of divine actions, yes, but with some residual dependence on revelation?

To make the question concrete, we can return to the central object of revelation for Schelling: the divine decision to redeem humanity by becoming flesh—that is, the mystery of the Incarnation. It is true that Schelling offers reasons for this decision and connects it to the principles of his positive philosophy, as mentioned above. To summarize briefly: As a result of the Fall, an alienating principle separated us from God, and that principle could not be fully overcome in paganism and Judaism (SW XIV: 167). To overcome the principle, it was necessary to overcome the will of the Father to punish mankind. But "will can only be overcome by will" (SW XIV: 168). Thus, the only means of saving mankind was the freely willed act of submission by the Son (the mediating potency) to the Father. And so Christ had to sacrifice himself in place of man, "the innocent in place of the guilty" (SW XIV: 169). From this brief summary, it is clear that Schelling is concerned with providing an explanation of the divine decision by giving reasons; he is not content to leave it as an impenetrable mystery (see SW XIV: 153-55). But do those reasons constitute a demonstration, giving us proof that the Incarnation had to happen?

There is an alternative interpretation for what Schelling is doing—one that relies on a historical precedent. As it happens, one of the classic works of medieval theology treats precisely the same theme: St. Anselm's treatise *Cur Deus Homo* ("Why God Became Man"). In that work, Anselm offers reasons why that have some resemblance to Schelling's (basically, only an incarnate God could repay the infinite debt man had incurred through sin).[31] But that treatise is not typically considered a work of philosophy. Instead, Anselm intends it to be theology, which is defined as *fides quaerens intellectum*, "faith seeking understanding," in a tradition going back to St. Augustine. The idea is

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[30] "The philosophy of revelation aims at nothing other than explaining [*erklären*] this higher history [of revelation]" (SW XIV: 30). "The first part of the philosophy of revelation proceeds to the point where, with the comprehensibility of the *content* of revelation, the possibility of a philosophy of revelation is also given. The second part is concerned with making this content comprehensible [*begreiflich*]" (SW XIII: 174). I believe that Schelling uses *begreifen* (to comprehend) and *begreiflich machen* (to make comprehensible) more or less interchangeably.

[31] Anselm, "Cur Deus Homo," in *Basic Writings*, ed. and trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2007), 237-326, esp. 319-22 (book 2, chapter 18).

that one begins from the standpoint of faith in revealed truth; then one seeks to understand what one believes by using reason and philosophical argument. But the key word is "seeks"—one *seeks* to understand. Total understanding of an infinite being is not possible in this life.[32]

Could "seeking understanding" accurately describe what Schelling is doing as well? He openly admits he is not in the business of proving the truths of Christianity: "It is not about a proof [*Erweis*] but rather the explanation of Christianity, which we *presuppose* as [historical] fact" (SW XIV: 34). *Explaining without proving* would certainly qualify as "seeking understanding" in the Augustinian sense. Moreover, there is a specific reason to think that Schelling's comprehension of Christianity falls short of demonstrative knowledge: divine freedom. As Schelling makes clear, the content of revelation is primarily divine acts, and those acts are free. That means that we cannot demonstrate philosophically that God had to act the way he did because that would mean his decision was not free but necessary.[33] At best, we can demonstrate the *possibility* and perhaps the probability of a certain form of divine action.

In fact, there are indications throughout Schelling's late lectures that by "comprehending" (*begreifen*) he means "understanding how something is possible." For example, in the 1842 *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, he notes that philosophical religion is needed to comprehend *as possible* what is already recognized as *actual* in mythology (SW XI: 250).[34] And throughout the *Philosophy of Revelation*, there is a similar dynamic with respect to actuality and possibility. Schelling notes that if the divine decision to become flesh had not been revealed as actual, human reason would never have regarded it as possible (SW XIV: 28; cf. SW XIV: 10). Much later, he even claims to establish the possibility of Christ's miracles through the unique features of the Incarnation (SW XIV: 188). Such examples suggest that revelation shows us the actuality of what reason on its own would not have regarded as possible. The task of philosophy, then, is to comprehend

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[32] "Since I take the understanding that we achieve in this life to be intermediate between faith and vision, I think that the more progress someone makes toward understanding, the closer he comes to that vision for which we all long." Anselm, "Cur Deus Homo," 237.

[33] Interestingly, Schelling does mention the "moral necessity" of the Incarnation (SW XIV: 167), a term that comes from Leibniz. See Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Theodicy*, trans. E. M. Huggard (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1985), 203 (Part II, §132). Given Schelling's views on divine freedom in his late philosophy, this moral necessity cannot be an absolute necessity as it had been in the *Freiheitsschrift*. For Schelling's treatment of moral necessity in the *Freiheitsschrift*, see Mark J. Thomas, *Freedom and Ground: A Study of Schelling's Treatise on Freedom* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2023), 161-63.

[34] The key phrase: "als möglich, und demnach philosophisch zu begreifen" (to comprehend as possible, and thus philosophically). Cf. "The task of a philosophy of revelation can only be to make the content of [revelation]…comprehensible, i.e., to show it as possible." F.W.J. Schelling, *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung*, ed. Walter E. Ehrhardt (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1992), 426.

revelation by understanding how the actual is indeed possible. But that would mean we are still dependent on revelation to establish its actuality—in particular, what God's free decisions actually are, since understanding how they are possible does not prove they are actual. Possible moons are not actual moons: we still cannot see the moons without the telescope.

So, if Schelling is really *seeking* understanding of revelation (without arriving at full knowledge), and if he presupposes some form of Christian faith in the background (as I suggested earlier), then we can say that Schelling's philosophy of revelation is an exercise in *faith seeking understanding*—that is, theology. That is probably not a conclusion he would like, and it certainly goes against his self-understanding in the *Philosophy of Revelation* lectures. But there is, after all, a great tradition of thinkers who creatively blend philosophy and theology, including Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas. We could number Schelling among them.

Interestingly, there is a late Schelling text in which he seems more open to the possibility of a philosophical theology along the lines I have indicated—perhaps even allowing for a form of religious faith. This is the 1846 preface to Henrich Steffen's posthumous writings. There he emphasizes the role of possibility we just discussed: if a presentation of Christianity is really going to satisfy the human spirit, then it needs to make evident to reason the *possibility* of the conditions (*Verhältnisse*) on which the main Christian teachings are based (SW X: 404-5).[35] But what is new in the text is the link Schelling draws between (1) insight into possibility and (2) the different forms of belief: "For all believing is believing in the *actuality*; [it is] blind when an insight into the *possibility* is missing…; [it is] enlightened [*erleuchtetes*] when the possibility is seen" (SW X: 406). Here Schelling distinguishes two forms of believing (blind or enlightened) based on whether the believer comprehends what is believed—that is, sees how it is possible.

Schelling then adds something decisive for understanding whether we can dispense with faith in revelation as the telescope. Even if one has insight into the possibility of some fact, that does not eliminate the need for faith. Why not? As noted already, if something is possible, it does not follow that it is actual: "One could perceive the possibility but not believe in the actuality. God does not necessarily do what it is possible for God to do. That he has *actually* done [some act]—that must always be *believed*" (SW X: 406). Here Schelling seems to concede that faith has an indispensable role to play in establishing what is actual, a role that will never become irrelevant, no matter how much philosophical insight into revelation we might gain. So, if we throw

[35] Schelling himself emphasizes the word "possibility." Remarkably, in the same passage he explicitly declines to endorse Lessing's line about "the development of revealed truths into truths of reason," even though he had quoted that line earlier in his career (SW VII: 412). He notes the expression is likely to be misunderstood (SW X: 404).

away the telescope, we might have a philosophy that is independent of revelation, but such a philosophy would still be restricted to the realm of what is possible (even if the scope of what is possible is now larger than it was before philosophy took revelation into consideration). If we want actuality and possibility together, we need what Schelling calls "enlightened believing"—in other words, some form of *faith seeking understanding*, theology.[36]

Conclusion: The Tension between Reason and Mystery

We have seen how Schelling claims that revelation is both essential and dispensable for true philosophy. That seemingly paradoxical claim reflects a creative tension in his thought that reaches far back in his philosophical development—at least to the 1809 *Freiheitsschrift*. We might express it as the tension between reason and mystery. On the one hand, there is a strong rationalist tendency in Schelling, reflected in his insistence that philosophy see revealed truths for itself. Along these lines, at the end of the *Freiheitsschrift*, he endorses Lessing's line that revealed truths need to be transformed into truths of reason (SW VII: 412). But the ultimate expression of this rationalist tendency with respect to revelation is Schelling's conception of a philosophical religion as religion's final form. His various descriptions of philosophical religion are schematic and reflect his ongoing attempts to work out the concept.[37] But it is clear enough that the project is motivated by a rationalist desire to be free of all dependence on authority—including the authority of revelation. Philosophical religion comprehends rationally what previously was taken on faith (SW XI: 250). Thus liberated from revelation, it takes its place at the end of religious history as "the religion of free insight and knowledge" (SW XIII: 194).

On the other hand, there is a profound sense of mystery in many of Schelling's works—a sense that the ultimate truth of things eludes human language and involves infinite depth. That sense of mystery is perhaps most obvious in works from Schelling's middle period, including the *Freiheitsschrift*,

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[36] Sean McGrath makes the perceptive remark that "Schelling does not, it seems, have any desire to understand a properly theological method in theology." *The Philosophical Foundations of the Late Schelling*, 192n47. I agree with respect to Schelling's *Philosophy of Revelation* lectures, but I think there are seeds of a more sophisticated understanding of theological method in the 1846 preface—perhaps in response to Steffens's theological writings. Schelling goes on to mention "a theology…in which *real* thinkability is shown" (SW X: 407). Unfortunately, he does not indicate how such a theology is different from his own philosophy of revelation.

[37] For a careful analysis of Schelling's development of the concept, see Thomas Buchheim, "Schellings Konzeption einer philosophischen Religion in Querschnitten ihrer Entwicklung über das Spätwerk hinweg," in *Religionsphilosophie nach Schelling: Mythos und Offenbarung*, ed. Christian Danz (Berlin: J.B. Metzler, 2024), 151-81.

Clara, and *The Ages of the World*. In the *Freiheitsschrift*, for example, Schelling calls attention to the "irreducible remainder" which can never be resolved in the understanding but remains forever in the ground (SW VII: 359-60). And he develops an account of the eternal deed of freedom that combines rationalist arguments with language that bumps up against the limits of understanding: that free act belongs to "a life before this life" (SW VII: 387).[38] In the *Philosophy of Revelation*, this mysterious tendency is reflected in Schelling's insistence that revelation is essential for philosophy and far exceeds human concepts. Above all, there is a mysterious, paradoxical quality to divine action, which Schelling compares to art: "In the same moment to be both drunk and sober—that is the mystery of true poetic creation [*Poesie*]" (SW XIV: 25).

It is true that Schelling's own treatment of mystery in the philosophy of revelation does not provide much room for mystery within philosophy proper: once a mystery is revealed, he says, it stops being a mystery and becomes intelligible (SW XIV: 11). But it seems to me that Schelling's own philosophy often demonstrates the opposite: a mystery can be revealed and continue to be a mystery, because it has infinite depth that can never be fully exhausted—the same qualities he had ascribed to the artwork of genius in 1800 (SW III: 619-20). And I would suggest the same applies to the mysteries of revelation, which we can seek to understand but never fully comprehend through reason alone. Even if that means we will always need a telescope to see Jupiter's moons.

[38] I have attempted to show how Schelling's *Freiheitsschrift* combines reason and mystery in the form of a "living rationalism." See Thomas, *Freedom and Ground: A Study of Schelling's Treatise on Freedom*, 179-81, 258-60.

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NEW COMMENTED TRANSLATION

Schelling's Literary Estate

Nora Angleys, Thomas Buchheim, and Fritz Engel[1]

1. Biographical Context

Since 1849, albeit intermittently, Schelling had been working on writing a testament. This testament did not manage his personal estate but was an "Overview of What Will Be My Literary Estate," determining which of his unpublished manuscripts were to be published and in what way. Among these unpublished manuscripts were some of the earliest writings from his studies; they were *mainly* middle, later, and latest works, however, as he had not published anything of greater conspicuity since the *Freedom Essay* (bibl. 25) in 1809 (with few exceptions, such as the polemic work against Jacobi, *F.W.J. Schelling's Monument to Jacobi's Work on the Divine Things* [*F.W.J. Schellings Denkmal der Schrift von den göttlichen Dingen etc. des Herrn Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi*, 1812] and the treatise *On the Deities of Samothrace* [*Über die Gottheiten von Samothrake*, 1815]).

In a letter dating from 12 February 1849 to the Kiel historian Georg Waitz, the husband of his daughter Clara, Schelling wrote about the "struggle

[1] We would like to thank Iris Simon, for her meticulous and committed support for compiling the editorial information, as well as Carlos Zorrilla Piña, for valuable contributions and fruitful discussions about this publication, which was written as part of the research project "Schellings unvollendetes System" (Schelling's Incomplete System | project number: 464064048), funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation).

[...] to lay down one's scientific and literary testament, on which I am working with all my force."[1] Letters from years following make further reference to this intention of bringing order to his estate. A letter to his son Karl Friedrich August Schelling (K.F.A.) from 24 July 1851, for example, reads: "Pray, that I may complete my work and bring some structure to my scientific estate."[2] This statement already suggests that for Schelling there is an important connection between structuring his literary estate and the completion of his final work *Philosophical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology or Presentation of the Purely Rational Philosophy* (*Philosophische Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie oder Darstellung der reinrationalen Philosophie*) (DRP, bibl. 4). Finally, on 20 February 1853, just before finishing[3] the testament, he writes in his calendar: "continued work on registering my literary estate, which took more time than expected."[4]

Schelling worried that his sons would not publish his latest—albeit insufficiently communicated and not yet fully matured—philosophical ideas as their father's final philosophy, but would instead present to the public a system with which *they* were familiar and that *they* deemed to be well-rounded, but one that Schelling himself considered to be outdated. This explains why bringing structure to his literary estate was so important to him.

Schelling had become more isolated in his philosophical workings. In the winter semester 1845/46—by then Schelling was seventy years old—only a small audience (reportedly no more than 29 listeners)[5] followed his last course: the main sections of the *Philosophy of Mythology* as found in *Schelling's collected works* (*Sämmtliche Werke*).[6] Contrast this with his inaugural lecture in Berlin, in winter 1841/42, on the reworked course on the philosophy of revelation, which was highly anticipated. The university's largest lecture hall was packed[7] not only with students but with the entire intellectual elite of the time, which had pointedly gathered to see him.

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[1] Gustav Leopold Plitt, ed., *Aus Schellings Leben: in Briefen*, Vol. 3. (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1869–1870), 214.

[2] Plitt, *Aus Schellings Leben* III, 231.

[3] The literary estate is dated "February 1853."

[4] *Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften – Archiv*. [= *BBAW-A-Schelling*], Nr.74 [= *Calendar 1853*], 8. For information about where to find the manuscripts of the late (unpublished) calendars, see bibl. *Manuscripts*.

[5] Olaf Briese, "'In einem freisinnigen Geiste.' Schellings Auftreten in Berlin im Licht neu erschlossener Zeugnisse," in *Berlin in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Jahrbuch des Landesarchivs Berlin 1995*, ed. Jürgen Wetzel, 85–97 (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1995), 95.

[6] *Schelling's collected works*, ed. Karl Friedrich August Schelling. 14 vols. Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta'scher Verlag, 1856–1861. [= SW]

[7] In the anonymously published text, Engels writes of "almost four hundred people, of all social positions and nations." (Friedrich Engels, "Schelling and Revelation: Critique of the Latest Attempt of Reaction Against the Free Philosophy," in *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 2. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2010, 189–240), 200.)

Expectations, however, were severely disappointed[8] over the course of that semester; the negative reception resounded so strongly in letters, news, and by word of mouth that Schelling must have known about it. Shortly after the end of the semester, numerous pamphlets against Schelling's *Philosophy of Revelation* emerged,[9] condemning it as too Christian and therefore old-fashioned. Among them was a very clever critique by Friedrich Engels[10] as well as a preposterous, meticulously-crafted transcript—supplemented with hostile commentary by his former friend, the theologian H.G.E. Paulus—which was deeply offensive to Schelling (see bibl. 17). Schelling sought legal remedies against the unauthorized publication by Paulus[11] of a transcript by a group of Young Hegelians,[12] but he ultimately lost in court,[13] which further angered him and contributed to his abandoning public lecturing altogether.

In the summer of 1842, Schelling attempted to vindicate his philosophy by reworking and improving his new introduction to the Berlin version of the *Philosophy of Revelation*, focusing on the two types of philosophy (positive and negative) and, so he hoped, explaining their relation to each other more clearly. This lecture—the *Berlin Introduction to the Philosophy of Revelation* (*Berliner Einleitung in die Philosophie der Offenbarung*[14]) (BI, bibl. 2)—which he

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[8] For more information on these expectations, see Briese, *Schellings Auftreten in Berlin*.

[9] E.g., Karl Rosenkranz, *Schelling. Vorlesungen, gehalten im Sommer 1842 an der Universität zu Königsberg* (Danzig: Gerhard, 1843); and Philipp Marheineke, *Zur Kritik der Schellingschen Offenbarungsphilosophie. Schluß der öffentlichen Vorlesungen über die Bedeutung der Hegelschen Philosophie in der christlichen Theologie* (Berlin: Enslin, 1843).

[10] Engels, "Schelling and Revelation." There is a second pamphlet by Engels, also published anonymously in 1842: "Schelling der Philosoph in Christo, oder die Verklärung der Weltweisheit zur Gottesweisheit für gläubige Christen, denen der philosophische Sprachgebrauch unbekannt ist," in *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 2. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2010), 315–339.

[11] Paulus did not write the transcript himself but bought it as a booklet. Xavier Tilliette, ed., *Schelling im Spiegel seiner Zeitgenossen* I (Turin: Bottega d'Erasmo, 1974), refers to Rosenkranz (477 and 487); see also the "Introduction" by Manfred Frank, in F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung 1841/42*, ed. Manfred Frank (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977) [based on the transcript by Heinrich Eberhard Gottlob Paulus], 48 (=*Paulus transcript*); and Xavier Tilliette, *Schelling: Biographie*, trans. Susanne Schaper, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2004), 418. Another theory is that Paulus did not merely buy the booklet, but he paid someone to take notes of the lecture (see Tilliette, *Schelling im Spiegel*, 405 and n1345).

[12] In Briese, *Schellings Auftreten in Berlin*, 95n83 refers to a letter by Conrad Philipp Marheineke to H.G.E Paulus dated 29 November 1842, which mentions the dissemination of the transcript (Universitätsbibliothek der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, autograph No. 678). Cf. bibl. *Manuscripts*.

[13] See Tilliette, *Schelling im Spiegel*, 419.

[14] The title is what Schelling used in his testament for this lecture, which he worked on from summer until autumn 1842, and read in the following winter semester for the first time (see bibl. 2). The published English version is F.W.J. Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures*, trans. Bruce Matthews (Albany: SUNY Press, 2008).

delivered for the first time[15] in winter 1842/43, is a relatively comprehensible and philosophically mature text reflecting the status quo of his philosophy at the time. It is, to-date, among the most prominent texts of Schelling's overall unapproachable late philosophy, and it still dominates the reception of Schelling's latest philosophical system, if we do not take into account Schelling's *last* revision-phase from about three years later (1846) until his death—a phase during which he explicitly distanced himself from the path and concepts he had set forth in BI. Schelling, however, upheld this revision in several places: He considered the BI not to be a part of the authorized concepts and thoughts of his latest revised philosophy, and, consequently, he did not want it published as a part of his final system.[16]

In fact, Schelling's latest revision resulted, strictly speaking, not in *one* system but rather in a kind of *systematic architecture*. We use the term "architecture" to emphasize that Schelling's latest philosophy is not one "system" in the conventional sense: It does not develop from and along conceptual necessities. Rather, his latest philosophy is based on the idea that two systems, each of a fundamentally different structure[17]—with their own methodologies and *without* an uninterrupted, internal transition between them—can be brought together as one philosophy through this complex "architecture." Nevertheless, this philosophy is distinctly and intentionally structured *around* a principle. This fundamentally different final architecture was the result of a far-reaching and extensive revision phase, one that had only begun after Schelling had withdrawn from public life at the university. The revision involved rearranging parts of his former philosophical system, most importantly the *Philosophy of Mythology* (MYL) and the *Philosophy of Revelation* (PO; bibl. 16 and 17 respectively), into a distinct new order of five books.[18] The revision in general, and in particular the philosophical legitimation of the resulting book-order, was never recognized, let alone understood—not by Schelling's peers and not even by his closest circle of friends, family, and followers.[19] Consequently, the publication of Schelling's late work in section II of *Schelling's collected works*, primarily by his second son, K.F.A., is based on an

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[15] He read another, reviewed and supplemented, version in the summer semester 1844 (see bibl. 2).

[16] According to his testament, he considered BI to be "worthy of stand-alone publication" at most (see below).

[17] Cf. BI, SW XIII: 133.

[18] See the dictation to the oldest son, Paul, from 1852 (*Appendix*) and also the newly published testament on the publishing of Schelling's literary estate.

[19] Schelling wrote to his old friend and former pupil Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert on 30 June 1850: "You shouldn't have [sc. sent a birthday letter to Schelling], as my affection for you does not hinge on you demonstrating yours; for me, however, as I am inching closer to the completion of my work and thereby becoming ever more lonely, it hurts to be deemed a dead man for my dearest, loyal, and old friends" (Plitt, *Aus Schellings Leben* III, 226).

understanding[20] that corresponded to the aforementioned *Philosophy of Revelation* from 1841/42—the one with such poor public reception—along with the subsequently-written and -reviewed introduction from 1842/43 (BI).

It is hence that *Schelling's collected works*, rather unintentionally, obscured his latest and key conceptual revisions—which revisions have remained inaccessible to his readership until today. Particularly noteworthy is the *Presentation of the Purely Rational Philosophy* (DRP), which was posthumously completed and ultimately edited by Schelling's son K.F.A.,[21] and which found its way into *Schelling's collected works*; but, due to its intricate character, does not immediately let Schelling's revisions come to light. Interestingly, instead of being used as proof and justification for the total exclusion of this very introduction from the newly arranged architecture, the DRP, particularly where it departs from the old system, has generally been interpreted in line with BI, a text from *before* the final revision. This skewed reception, from the outset, adds to the difficulty of understanding the DRP today.

For Schelling, the DRP is *key* to understanding the revision, as it was new in important ways, with significant consequences for the order and status of those texts that belong to his latest philosophy. In fact, the entirety of Schelling's latest philosophy lacks systematic character without the DRP.[22] Schelling, however, realized, already while working on the DRP—which he began in 1846—that his peers would not be able to grasp properly the magnitude of this latest revision. This is why he was adamant not only to complete this work, but to establish its final role and function. Fully aware of the likelihood of his dying before achieving this goal, he laid down detailed and definitive instructions in his testament.

2. General Overview of the Testament

The testament is titled "Overview of What Will Be My Literary Estate," dated February 1853, and signed by Schelling. His intention was not merely to list his manuscripts, but to shape them into his philosophical legacy, centered around the above-mentioned latest systematic architecture. And, should he

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[20] See e.g., K.F.A.'s very long introduction to the *Philosophy of Revelation* (SW XIII) as well as correspondences between the siblings and close family members on the overall publication process.

[21] The end of the 23rd lecture (SW XI: 550–552) and the entire 24th lecture were compiled by K.F.A. from the folio sheet with "notes for my own use" (see below) that he found on Schelling's desk—following specific instructions given by Schelling before the latter's death. For further details and contextualization of the editorial editions, see Thomas Buchheim, "Schellings 'Unvollendete'. Die Darstellung der reinrationalen Philosophie und ihr fragwürdiges Ende in der 24. Vorlesung," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 132 (2025): 3–21.

[22] "the publication of everything else was suspended until the completion of this text" (SW XI: vii) [= DRP].

have been unable to finish his work, the testament gives instructions about which manuscripts and partial manuscripts were to be included in his latest philosophy and published as such, and—just as importantly—which ones were to be excluded. This process of careful selection was especially extensive for the *Philosophy of Mythology* and the *Philosophy of Revelation*, as Schelling had delivered those lectures in several iterations under the same titles since the end of the 1820s in Munich, annotating and correcting existing versions and having some of the older ones transcribed or copied.

This practice resulted in multiple significantly different versions—with completely new additions to some of the existing manuscripts—which made it ever more important to determine the *correct* drafts and passages for publication. In making such determinations, Schelling wanted to ensure that the structure of his latest philosophical work was the one he ultimately believed to be fitting, rather than one reflecting older aspects of his philosophy, which he, again, deemed to be outdated: Schelling's latest insights were not merely *extensions* but rather far-reaching *revisions*. Hence, as we know from his late calendars,[23] he worked on the manuscripts continuously until the year of his death.[24]

In the same vein, Schelling included in the testament instructions and word-for-word transitions between the individual works of his latest architecture—notably on how to interpret the DRP and the *Source(s) of Eternal Truths* (*Quelle der ewigen Wahrheiten*) (QEW, bibl. 4.1)[25] as well as *The Monotheism* (MOT, bibl. 14). He detailed not only an understanding of those texts, but he explained their *integration into* and *consequences for* the overall systematic

[23] Schelling continued to keep calendars (journals) after he moved to Berlin in 1841. The calendars for the years 1846, 1848, and 1849 are published at Meiner (bibl. 18). Frommann-Holzboog had planned the edition of the calendars 1842–54; however, they remain unpublished (for more information, see bibl. *Manuscripts*).

[24] In the calendar from the year he died, Schelling wrote, on 11 January: "Reviewed all earlier lectures from Berlin: $\frac{B}{O}$, $\frac{B}{EO}$ and later $\frac{B}{+}$"; and the next day, he "proceeded as on the 11. (with $\frac{B}{EO}$)." (Manuscript: *BBAW-A-Schelling*, Nr. 75 [= *Calendar 1854*].) We can therefore assume that throughout these manuscripts there are sections that are a coalescence of older passages and later additions and corrections. This arrangement requires particular attention, careful comparison, and interpretation of the conceptually crucial aspects.

[25] Presented to the Berlin Academy of Sciences in January 1850 and included in *Schelling's collected works* (SW XI: 575–590). In the testament, Schelling uses the title *Sources of Eternal Truths*, i.e., in the plural. The published version uses the singular *Source*.

architecture.[26] Even for those who have studied and are familiar with the latest Schelling, these provisions are often surprising and generally difficult. Interestingly, to-date, no attempt has been made critically to map the testament's provisions onto the writings of the second section of *Schelling's collected works*, and thereby to highlight the important deviations with respect to the revised latest philosophy.

The "overview" of the literary estate contains six parts:

(I) Unpublished "older" manuscripts up until Schelling's Würzburg time, in particular his *Philosophy of Art* and the *System of Philosophy in General* from 1804.

(II) "Newer" manuscripts until the mid-20s, most prominently the *Ages of the World*, *Stuttgart Private Lectures*, and *Erlangen Lectures*.

(III) The longest section of the testament, titled "newest," is on the manuscripts for the *Philosophy of Mythology* and *Philosophy of Revelation*. Furthermore, the section lists additional manuscripts, which were prepared (Munich) or were written during this cycle (Berlin). They are subsumed under the subtitle "on the system of philosophy."

(IV) Several manuscripts from across different times, containing, among others, the dialogue *Clara*.

(V) Several texts, which Schelling labels "separately stored manuscripts": manuscripts from his university days, private calendars, and notebooks, all of which may be used within the family or for preparing publications.

(VI) Concluding remarks to his sons and family, in general addressing the imposition of managing his estate; furthermore, Schelling leaves "all correspondences" to his family. He furthermore instructs the lectures to the Berlin Academy to be copied and printed immediately thereafter. For reasons later explained, however, his sons did not comply.

Schelling clearly instructs the destruction of some of the manuscripts—once everything that can be used in the context of his latest philosophy has been extracted. Fortunately for us, in some important cases, the sons did not follow said instructions (such as with the Würzburg *System of Philosophy* or the *Erlangen Lectures*). On the other hand, all important manuscripts from Berlin

[26] Again, according to Schelling, we are decidedly not talking about *one* philosophical system, but rather an architecture of five steps. Furthermore, the term "system" applies in two fundamentally different ways to undertakings *within* this architecture (cf. BI, SW XIII: 133), a passage that we know to be added later by Schelling's own hand to the manuscript written by Stort, as the two different handwritings are clearly distinguishable in the original manuscript (*BBAW-A-Schelling*, Nr. 106 [also referred to as *Stort'sche Abschrift*], 248; see bibl. *Manuscripts*).

(except for the *Berlin Introduction to the Philosophy of Revelation*), as well as all older fragments contributing to those Berlin lectures, were destroyed after the publication of the second section of *Schelling's collected works*, making any critical edition of those texts impossible. It is, however, still possible to undertake a *critical assessment* of their philosophical content against the backdrop of the entirety of still-available documents surrounding Schelling's latest revision—most instructive among which are the testament and a dictation to Paul (*Appendix*) documenting Schelling's envisioned architecture at the time (1852).

3. Assessment of the Different Editions of the Testament

The provided English translation[27] is based on a different transcript than the one used for publication by Horst Fuhrmans in 1959 in *Kant-Studien* (Vol. 51). The transcript chosen here for translation from the Schelling archive in Berlin[28] is significantly more detailed and in relevant places more accurate and truer to the material Schelling left behind. Where relevant, deviations from the version published by Fuhrmans are listed in the footnotes. This transcript was reviewed and corrected by a clearly well-informed person: immediately during its copying or shortly thereafter. This is evident, for example, in places where a first hand (using ink) left some blank spaces, which were then later filled in by a second hand with pencil. Additionally, the same second hand added a number of corrections and annotations to the transcript, which suggest[29] that the second hand is an editor well familiar with Schelling's writings, most likely

[27] Schelling's handwriting, especially in his older years, was virtually indecipherable; only a few, mainly family members, could read it. They made several copies of the testament and stored them separately. The original manuscript written by Schelling himself seems to be lost. The transcript used by Fuhrmans was made by Schelling's second daughter, Clara Waitz, and was, at the time, in possession of Emmy Waitz in Bielefeld. Another transcript, more like the one made by Clara Waitz, albeit copied less meticulously, can be found in the archive of the university library in Munich under the title "autograph No. 29." (For more information, see bibl. *Manuscripts*.) This could be another, later copy of the transcript made by Clara Waitz. Unfortunately, the original of the transcript made by Clara Waitz could not be obtained, and comparisons could only be made to the edited version by Fuhrmans. Where Fuhrmans's edition of the testament differs from the here-offered translation of Schelling's testament, Fuhrmans's version is acknowledged in the footnotes as "Fuhrmans."

[28] Labeled by the archive with pencil, "1 and 2376," each circled. (*BBAW-A-Schelling*, Nr.13/1; see bibl. *Manuscripts*).

[29] In two places we find the comment "leave space somewhere"—in order, perhaps, to allow for supplementing passages from other manuscripts described in the testament during preparation of the edition of the collected works.

K.F.A.[30] The handwriting in ink shows tidy, steady penmanship, which we believe to be not identical with K.F.A.'s[31] handwriting, but similar to the handwriting of Schelling's son-in-law, Ulrich von Zech—albeit somewhat more sinuous. Ulrich had frequently been asked by the late Schelling to make copies of his rather illegible manuscripts. The second hand, noted on page 1 of the testament (albeit difficult to read) in pencil: "Ulrich | Cott(a) | 1853."

It must be emphasized that the second hand consistently made quite relevant corrections and additions. For instance, all "+"-signs, where they stand for *positive* in terms of a "positive" philosophy, were replaced with the word *positive* written out. In the one passage, where the + sign does *not definitively* equate to "positive" philosophy, it remained unchanged.[32] Again, this suggests a great deal of familiarity with the existing manuscripts and Schelling's philosophical habits—a familiarity the first hand seems to have lacked.

4. Methodology

Schelling's testament and the 1852 dictation are two of the few scarcely known documents in which Schelling explicitly lays out his vision for what is to be his philosophical legacy—which he considers to be the only viable attempt at a post-Kantian metaphysics. Importantly, and as these documents show, Schelling believed that achieving this goal would require his philosophy to be substantially expanded and fundamentally revised. Schelling left a plethora of texts, manuscripts, and correspondences reflecting his continuous work on

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[30] On 8 July 1855, K.F.A., then in Weinsberg, working on finalizing the edition of the first volume of Schelling's incomplete late philosophy (SW XI: *Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*), wrote to his brother Hermann in Berlin (letter: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Ana 608.B.III., see bibl. *Manuscripts*): "Please send as quickly as possible the Promemoria, which I left in Gotha, and requested it be sent to me, and from where I was informed that Ulrich had given it to you so you could give it to me. I need it for the end." "The end" in the letter refers to the end of the important 24th lecture of the DRP, for which Schelling gave detailed instructions and even dictated word-for-word passages in his testament, which here is referred to as "Promemoria." Ulrich (i.e., Ulrich von Zech, husband of Schelling's daughter Caroline), who lived in Gotha, is named as sender of the testament, which suggests that he had written the relevant copy K.F.A. is asking for in his letter.

[31] See previous footnote (for a contrary position cf. Anna-Lena Müller-Bergen (with contributions by Simone Egidio Sartori), "Karl Friedrich August Schelling und 'die Feder des seligen Vaters': Editionsgeschichte und Systemarchitektur der zweiten Abteilung von F.W.J. Schellings 'Sämmtlichen Werken'" in *Internationales Jahrbuch für Editionswissenschaft* 21 (2007): 110–132, 115n25). The autographs we know to be K.F.A.'s never have an upward line on the letter "s" at the end of a word, only a downward line.

[32] This refers to the manuscript $\frac{B}{+}$, which we know to be the manuscript for the Berlin lecture on "The Principles of Philosophy" (winter semester 1843/44) and from which the fragment *Presentation of the Natural Process* (*Darstellung des Naturprocesses*) was taken and published in the 10th volume of the first section of *Schelling's collected works*.

this project. The way in which the testament carefully selects individual manuscripts for what is to be his legacy reflects his desire to mold these iterations into a philosophically valid systematic architecture.

We believe the following three insights to be indicative of his intended ultimate architecture:

1) A philosophy of pure reason (what Schelling calls *negative philosophy*) brought to its end, as the second step of an introduction into post-critical metaphysics, can only leave us with the certainty that it is *not impossible* that there can be a single principle of all ontic being (*Seiendes*). Importantly, not only of ideal ontic being, but also of actual being in the "altered" (SW XI: 571), i.e., non-ideal, historical world.

2) Not only is it "not impossible," but, when we look at human history as a whole, we find that the name "only God" and its intended concept, a concept that monotheistic religion had always claimed as a *central dogma* and called by this very name, corresponds to this possible principle.

3) Additionally, a philosophical investigation into the history of religions, beginning with the earliest mythologies, reveals that despite the unfathomable diversity of religions in the world, they all factually exist *as part of one* theogonic process in human consciousness, and their succession within this process is not merely contingent.

Hence, the fact that we can recognize this theogonic process in the historical occurrences of religion (one of the tasks of *positive philosophy*) can provide us with more rational grounds for the existence of God as monotheistic religions have taught and worshiped Him than for His non-existence. Schelling's latest revision, once again, fundamentally changed not only the scope of negative and positive philosophy, but also their relation to each other, which required a completely new movement from one to the other.

These latest insights, and their increasing complexity as a result of Schelling's further reflections on Kant's critical philosophy, are what Schelling's son and editor K.F.A. did not grasp in their full extension and philosophic significance. This led the latter to ignore some of the explicit instructions in the testament. Consequently, the publication of *Schelling's collected works* obscures the above-mentioned architecture. The task of evaluating the testament cannot, therefore, rely on now-typical notions of what comprises Schelling's latest philosophy, but must rather take into account the specific instructions that Schelling himself left, especially where they diverge from his earlier systematic conceptions.

As the explanations given above illustrate, Schelling's latest thinking—for access to which the testament is indispensable, representing as it does a culmination of that thinking's complexity—is hidden under multiple layers: philosophical insights, publication plans, correspondences, editorial decisions by Schelling and others, and, where impossible to ignore, even personal

motives. Where feasible, this translation with commentary attempts to identify, separate, and contextualize these layers. This also requires highlighting where and why the edition diverges from Schelling's specific instructions and, consequently, why and how existing interpretations of his work partially run counter to his intentions—until today. This interpretive difficulty results in sometimes complex or surprising findings that can be understood properly only in the context of Schelling's latest revision as a whole.

The English translation of the testament's sections (I), (II), and (IV)–(VI) is published here for the first time, but it is rather sparsely commentated. Additionally, we have compiled a list of relevant publications of the texts mentioned in the testament, with existing translations, under *Editorial Information*. The numbers in the editorial information correspond to numbers in the bibliography. Section (III), however, which discusses Schelling's "latest" works (i.e., the entire late philosophy) is portioned into 11 smaller sections (III.a–III.k), each with a detailed commentary considering the current state of Schelling research.

The translation and (importantly) the instructions given by Schelling stand for themselves. Obviously, the commentary, insofar as it provides contextualization, is influenced by what we have identified as these main intentions. This identification, however, is, as the following shows, the result of a careful and rigorous reading both of Schelling's own statements in the documents and the numerous sources mentioned in the footnotes.

5. Translation of Testament

I. Older Manuscripts (Jena and Würzburg Years)

Overview Of What Will Be My Literary Estate
Manuscripts
A. in Quarto
1) Older
   a) Msc. in large 4, titled: *Philosophy of Art* [*Philosophie der Kunst*]. More or less the entire chapter: *On Tragedy* [*Von der Tragödie*] would be print-worthy. Other chapters partially at most.
   b) Various lectures on *The System of Philosophy* [*System der Philosophie*]; in part (large 4) written still in Jena, in part (small 4) written in Würzburg. Contains at most fractions that would be usable, if you, Fritz or Hermann, want to put in the effort to sort through, otherwise to be burned.

Editorial Information (I.): Bibl. 15. *The System of Philosophy* most likely refers to either bibl. 19 or 22.

II. Newer Manuscripts (Munich Years from 1810 until Erlangen Years)

2) Newer.

a) One manuscript on pag. 1 labeled X—containing individual numbered sentences from 1–590. This msc. contains the earliest[33] studies on the intended work: *The Ages of the World* [*Die Weltalter*], which, contrary to the understanding of many, was not intended to be historical-philosophical, but rather concerned itself with the χρόνους αἰωνίους.[34] There may be other viable, ultimately unused kernel[35] here and there. If Fritz and Hermann consider those to be worth preserving, they may be published as *Fragments* [*Fragmente*], otherwise to be destroyed.

b) A second manuscript (small 4) containing sketches for my private lectures held in Stuttgart before a circle of friends in 1810 (late president Georgii's transcript$_n$[36] (enclosed) may aid with the deciphering). Whether to be used entirely or partially, *penes vos judicium sit*.[37] Incidentally, much therein remains inchoate as I found the decisive ideas only in the following years.

c) A third manuscript containing the first *Erlangen Lectures* [*Erlanger Vorlesungen*], in content only, as they were not read from the manuscript (two transcripts$_n$, one bound, the other unbound, each an individual booklet). Partially usable at most; to be destroyed if I have not found the time to do it myself.

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33 Fuhrmans: latest.

34 "Eternal times" or "eternal ages." See e.g., F.W.J. Schelling, *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung*, ed. Walter Ehrhardt, 2 vols. (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1992), 209. [=*Urfassung*; see bibl. 17.]

35 Fuhrmans: Msc.

36 The German original distinguishes between *Abschrift* and *Nachschrift*, both of which have been translated as "transcript" for lack of distinct English terms. For clarity, we have added subscript *c* for "copy" (Abschrift) and subscript *n* for "notes (taken during lecture)" (Nachschrift).

37 I.e., "You be the judge of that."

d) A smaller (i.e., shorter) booklet, containing an *Introduction to Philosophy* [*Einleitung in die Philosophie*][38] delivered at the time.—Same applies as to c)—Partially usable at most for historical purposes.

Editorial Information (II.): Bibl. 8, 21, 10, and 9.

III. Newest Manuscripts (Manuscripts on Philosophy of Mythology and Revelation)

3) Newest. These comprise, above all
   a) The concepts for the Lectures on the *Philosophy of Mythology* [*Philosophie der Mythologie*].
      α) A bundle titled: "Oldest Lectures and Preliminary Works on Mythology" [Älteste Vorlesungen und Vorarbeiten zur Mythologie].[39] Some parts still important, in particular the booklet labeled H (the last one in a series of individual booklets beginning with A). The booklet H contains the references (citations) pertaining to the *Doctrine of Mysteries* [*Mysterienlehre*], included as part of the Philosophy of Revelation.

III.a—Editorial Information: Bibl. 16 and 17.

III.a—Commentary:

The doctrine of mysteries is the last step[40] of a *Philosophy of Mythology* and gives a philosophical grounding and analysis of the historical *transition* from mythological religions to religions of revelation.[41] Today, this section is located in the 19th to 23rd lecture of the first ("general") section of the *Philosophy of*

[38] The text in question is most likely the lecture read under the title *Introductio in universam philosophiam* as published in Vol. II/10,1 of AA, 2020, as the lecture catalogue only announces this lecture for the winter semester 1821/22. See page 109 of the *Editorial Introduction* in the same volume.
[39] Christian Danz dates the first lecture of the *Philosophy of Mythology* as early as 1821, as a part of the Erlangen Lectures. Christian Danz, "'Über Bedeutung 'und Ursprung' der Mythologie zusammen, weil nicht voneinander zu trennen': Schellings *Gottheiten von Samothrake* im Kontext der werkgeschichtlichen Entstehung seiner *Philosophie der Mythologie*," in *Schellings Gottheiten von Samothrake im Kontext*, ed. Christian Danz (Göttingen: V & R unipress; Vienna University Press, 2021), 231–252.
[40] See e.g., SW XII: 162, and more explicitly, 648.
[41] Since his treatise *On the Deities of Samothrace* (1815), Schelling had conducted many studies and readings on the mysteries and related texts, which he compiled in a booklet, which K.F.A. certainly used as references for the publication of *Schelling's collected works*. For the English version, see: F.W.J. Schelling, *On the Deities of Samothrace*, ed. Alexander Bilda, Jason M. Wirth, and David Farrell Krell (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2025).

Revelation (SW XIII: 411–530), and rightly so, according to Schelling; it is, then, part of the latest architecture and correctly sits right before the beginning of what ultimately remains as the *Philosophy of Revelation* (as opposed to the whole SW XIII–XIV). The testament explicitly incorporates the doctrine of mysteries into the *Philosophy of Revelation*. This suggests that the doctrine of mysteries is the direct systematic transition from the end of the *Philosophy of Mythology* into the *Philosophy of Revelation*, which in turn means: those parts of the *Philosophy of Revelation* that were repetitive or divergent would—in its modified form—(mostly) be dropped from the final architecture, as confirmed by other, later instructions given in the testament.

> β) One[42] copy each of two earlier prints of the (historical-critical) *Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* [*Historisch-kritische Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie*].[43] (For any comparison with the manuscript mentioned under (αα), and as proof of how long before the final publication the main idea of the *Philosophy of Mythology* had been in my mind).
>
> γ) The <u>main course</u>[44] on the *Philosophy of Mythology* as it was given in Munich (in Summer 1828 for the first time). As the course was subsequently repeated several times, there are many complementing editions; and later drafts refer to, e.g., the respective lectures of 1828 or '30 if those lectures were repeated *simpliciter*. In particular, the stored papers attempting the deduction of <u>monotheism</u> are plentiful. All very useful, but not for printing. The <u>main basis</u> to be used,[45] if I cannot arrange printing of the whole myself, would be the thickest bundle labeled III.

III.b—Editorial Information: Bibl. 13 and 16.

III.b—Commentary:

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[42] Inserted by second hand.
[43] These earlier prints must have been significantly older than the manuscript intended for publication mentioned under αα). The latter, in particular the 10th lecture, was significantly modified by Schelling as late as 1846 (see F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophische Entwürfe und Tagebücher 1846: Philosophie der Mythologie und reinrationale Philosophie*, ed. Lothar Knatz, Hans Jörg Sandkühler, and Martin Schraven (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2023) [= *Calendar 1846*]; see bibl. 18). But earlier parts of the *Historical-critical Introduction* were probably also reworked by Schelling.
[44] Underlined by second hand.
[45] Namely, for printing.

The "main course" on the *Philosophy of Mythology* had been, since 1828, continuously reused for lectures and developed further, partially written anew, or supplemented with corrections and annotations (the same most likely applied to the "main manuscript" of the *Philosophy of Revelation* below). These iterations produced "many complementing editions" in different bundles on the same subject matter. Only one of those editions, which Schelling called the "main basis," was to be used for publishing the *Philosophy of Mythology*. The editor also makes reference to this "main basis" in the preliminary remarks[46] to SW XII. This version used by the editor was significantly different from the Munich ones, not least because it features the treatise on monotheism as a complete, standalone[47] text analyzing the historically granted concept of monotheism (i.e., as a historical fact)—a reevaluation and repositioning of the treatise on monotheism that most likely happened after 1845, as we do not yet find this in the notes Henri-Frédéric Amiel took while attending Schelling's lecture on the Philosophy of Mythology in that year. In any case, this reevaluation and repositioning is in accordance with the testament, which clarifies that *The Monotheism* neither belongs to the negative nor the positive philosophy (see Commentary III.f below).

The mentioned "attempts" of the "deduction" of monotheism in the context of the *Philosophy of Mythology*—i.e., *within* the positive philosophy—are distinctly *not* what Schelling wanted to be published, but rather, despite some valuable parts, to be disregarded. Nevertheless, K.F.A. published some sections from these attempts in *Schelling's collected works* and labeled them accordingly.[48]

> δ) The latest and most important manuscript on the *Philosophy of Mythology* is the one which I have recently[49] prepared for printing, and which is stored in the middle compartment of my standing desk—separate from the other manuscripts (located in my three cabinets). This manuscript contains:

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[46] Preliminary Remarks to SW XII: vii: "for laying down the final text I focused only on the first [sc. "newer"] manuscripts and out of those particularly on the one which the author requested to be the basis for this publication…." Cf. SW XII: v: "This *Presentation of a Philosophy of Mythology* [*Darstellung der Philosophie der Mythologie*] was read publicly for the last time in the years 1842 and 1845/46 in Berlin, during which time it was last reviewed and, in some parts, newly edited."

[47] Furthermore, this final arrangement is also what Schelling dictated to his son Paul (*Appendix*).

[48] Cf. for example SW XII: 62 and 101.

[49] Missing in Fuhrmans.

αα) the historical-critical part of the *Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*: lectures I–X, nicely written, dictated, but not revised.[50] Mistakes, therefore, as they inevitably occur in dictation, must be corrected. Otherwise, this manuscript is fully ready for printing.

III.c—Commentary:

The "latest and most important manuscript on the *Philosophy of Mythology*" contains the "introduction" to said text, which in turn comprises, first, the historical-critical part (=HKE), mentioned in αα), spanning the lectures I–X and of which a clean (albeit not revised) copy dictated by Schelling was available.[51] Second, the "philosophical part" of the introduction to the *Philosophy of Mythology* mentioned in ββ), for which Schelling gave detailed instructions. *Together* they make one manuscript, namely the *Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, which Schelling arranged as a consecutive succession of lectures (we know from other sources that the philosophical part was numbered with Roman numerals XI–XXII or XXIII) and paginated from start to finish: The highest page number found on a manuscript page is 904.[52] This page contains a passage from today's 23rd lecture (SW XI: 548–550) and abruptly ends in the middle of a sentence.

These instructions on the two introductory parts are characteristic for Schelling: the plausibility of the task (i.e., positive philosophy) established by the historical-critical analysis is doubted by the "philosophy familiar" (SW XI: 251).[53] Resolving these doubts requires, as a first step, exploring how far a purely rational philosophy can get in accomplishing this task, paving the way, so to say, for a more committed positive philosophy that is to follow and actually succeed. A comprehensive introduction to the actually intended *Philosophy of Mythology* and of *Revelation* consists, then, in the combination of both, the historical-critical part and the purely rational analysis it called for.

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[50] May be identical to "msc. in Stort's writing until lecture XI," mentioned by Schelling in the program for his works, dictated to Paul 1852 (*Appendix*), which is "to be used."

[51] The part is titled *Historical-critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* (*Historisch-kritische Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie*) and most likely, Schelling, as he always did, added further annotations and changes.

[52] Found by Ehrhardt in one of Schelling's notebooks titled "1851" (*BBAW-A-Schelling*, Nr. 123; see bibl. *Manuscripts*).

[53] Cf. F.W.J. Schelling, *Historical-critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, ed. Dennis Schmidt, trans. Mason Richey and Markus Zisselsberger (Albany: State University of New York, 2007), 174.

ββ) The philosophical part of the introduction, the purpose[54] of which stems from the following: The last (X[th]) lecture of the preceding part categorizes religion in 1) natural (i.e., mythological) 2) revealed, 3) philosophical [religion], which would have to (*realiter*) comprise the other two—but—does not exist, because the philosophy (the positive) that could comprehend them[55] does not exist.
This motivates the presentation of the purely rational or negative philosophy to show how that philosophy itself ultimately ends with the demand for the positive philosophy. —

III.d—Commentary:

Schelling's explanation regarding the "purpose" of the philosophical part of the introduction to the *Philosophy of Mythology* requires further elaboration.

The result presented at the end of the historical-critical introduction is as follows: tracing back the actual evolution of human consciousness in its consecutive steps to its historical beginning established that there can be only three types of religion.[56] The first step in the evolution are *mythological religions*, which seem to be directly imposed onto human consciousness and are eventually replaced by a newer type, namely *religions of revelation*. Such are not imposed on the human consciousness but rather are a free devotion to a God who has revealed Himself. The third type of religion, which c*omprises (realiter)* the other two, is the *philosophical religion*. It no longer relies on the dogmatic authority of a revelation but rather on the *philosophical insight* into what grounds religion—with its particular character and meaning—in the overall structure of human consciousness. This philosophical insight, then, becomes itself the foundation for religious worship. This, of course, was under the provision that the addressee of all religious worship, i.e., God, actually—and according to this very philosophical insight—*exists*: a provision that, for Schelling, was indeed debatable and for him an open question.

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[54] The original uses the German term "Bewandtnis"—"Den philosophischen Teil der Einleitung. Mit diesem hat es folgende Bewandtnis." Any translation of this German word seems unsatisfactory, as it falls short of capturing all of the original's facets and dimensions. "Bewandtnis" not only motivates a certain move and marks the purpose of a certain undertaking, but it also emphasizes the particularly relevant aspect within that which marks a certain purpose.

[55] In the original: "[...] weil die Philosophie nicht existiert, die sie begreifen könnte (die positive)." What requires comprehension here—in our reading—are the mythological and revealed religions (plural). The German grammar, however, would also allow for the following reading: what requires comprehension is religion (singular).

[56] See lecture 10, HKE, SW XI: in particular, 237–251.

For Schelling, there was no example of a *philosophical religion* yet, i.e., the philosophical religion "does not exist."[57] Moreover, as Schelling explains in the testament,[58] it *cannot* exist as long as the necessary condition for its existence is not fulfilled—which, again, is the aforementioned "philosophical insight" that would comprehend *real* religion in general and in particular the two already existing types of religion.

This philosophy (in contrast to a misguided doctrine of reason equating the concept of God with God's actuality), which comprehends religion in its *peculiar* character, is what Schelling called "positive" philosophy or genuine science (*eigentliche Wissenschaft*),[59] and which he had been trying to develop for so long. Positive philosophy, in this sense, consists in obtaining the needed philosophical insight into the historical succession of the real religions. Additionally, it must be *philosophically*, and in that sense scientifically, established that this succession is *not* one of mere illusions and historical mistakes, but rather one for which the addressee of all religion does, in fact, exist—rather than not exist. *Only then* would the ideal condition (i.e., the *ideal* comprehension of religion) be fulfilled, so that the philosophical religion could take its place in the succession of real religions; that is, it could exist and, as such, could comprise "*realiter*" the other types of religion in human consciousness.[60]

In short: Only once the positive philosophy has comprehended the real religions in thought (ideally), the philosophical religion could become a reality, which would then *realiter* comprise earlier types of religion and thereby take on its legitimate place in the succession of real religions. There remain,

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[57] *Calendar 1846*, 122; HKE, SW XI: 250; DRP, SW XI: 255. Cf. also, albeit less explicitly, Chovát's 1842 transcript in F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophie der Mythologie in drei Vorlesungsnachschriften 1837/1842*, ed. Klaus Vieweg and Christian Danz (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1996), 171; see bibl. 16.

[58] Schelling makes this explicit also, e.g., in HKE, SW XI: 250, and in DRP, SW XI: 255.

[59] See lecture 16, DRP, SW XI: 366–374.

[60] DRP, SW XI: pp.568: "Only with the transition to the positive philosophy we enter the subject matter of religion and religions, and we can only now expect the philosophical religion to come into existence, which must comprise *realiter* the real religions, that is, the mythological and the revealed religion, and it now becomes evident that what we call philosophical religion has nothing in common with the so-called religion of reason."

however, strong philosophically valid *objections of reason*[61] against taking religion as a legitimate subject matter of philosophy. What must be done, therefore, is to show that philosophy of reason (i.e., negative philosophy), once completely exhausted, ultimately provides the rational license for the *demand* for positive philosophy.

This demand for positive philosophy is reached through the second of these two steps: First, the goal of positive philosophy is legitimized in pure (≠ purely rational) *thinking*, which naturally culminates in and carves out a *functional position* for a proper principle potentially assumed by that which we refer to under the name "God." It must then, additionally, be shown how a philosophy of reason is ultimately unable to grasp the addressee of religion—neither as a concept nor as existent. This is, then, the "purpose" of the philosophical part of the *Introduction*: developing the above-mentioned demand for a positive philosophy out of philosophically legitimized concepts and strict *a priori* principles and methods; and thereby dissolving the "objections of reason" against positive philosophy.

> This part (ββ), unfortunately, remains incomplete to date and from lecture XV onwards partially differing concepts exist. If I am unable to do so, Fritz and Hermann shall take care of publication. I have no doubt they will proceed with the same reverence for their father's legacy that they had for him in life. Where Fritz is in doubt, he shall ask Hermann and vice versa. —Hermann recently lived with me for some time[62] and therefore had the opportunity to familiarize himself with my thinking on various matters. Most importantly: where possible, what is available is to be made into a whole (up to the above-mentioned goal) [[= demand for the positive philosophy]].

III.e—Commentary:

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[61] Schelling to Ulrich v. Zech, Berlin 26 May 1851 (Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Chart. A 2085a I; see bibl. *Manuscripts*): "this work which intends to completely conclude philosophy as a science of pure reason and to bring it to its last crisis, something Kant's critique had only begun, and, after having fully done justice to it, to have totally free space for a positive philosophy." Schelling's letter to K.F.A. on 15 June 1851 (Plitt, *Aus Schellings Leben* III, 228): "The intention is to fully conclude the negative philosophy, to bring it to an end, from which there is no return. I deemed this work necessary, because, as long as it has not received full justice, it maintains at least silent objections against the higher, positive, and no one would commit to the latter with all their soul."

[62] See Schelling's letter to Hermann from 14 February1853 (*BBAW-A-Schelling*, Nr.863; see bibl. *Manuscripts*), printed, albeit wrongly dated in Otto Braun, "Briefe Schellings an seine Söhne Fritz und Hermann" in *Hochland. Monatsschrift für alle Gebiete des Wissens / der Literatur & Kunst* 9, (October 1911–March 1912): 316–327, here 327.

Lecture XV (February 1853) in the completed manuscript is equivalent with today's 16th lecture, as can be seen in the correspondence on later publishing activities, and by taking into account a new arrangement[63] from September 1855, which divided the 14th lecture into two. What is here taken to be "complete" is likely a transcript$_c$ of today's lectures 12–16, which collection Schelling had his son-in-law Ulrich make in 1851, and which he then sent to his son K.F.A.[64] However, as we know from his latest calendars,[65] Schelling continued reviewing and probably changing this manuscript until his death.

While there was in early 1853 a "completed" line of thought only up to lecture 16, "differing concepts" on the further development of the DRP up to lecture XXII (today's 23rd lecture) already existed.[66]

When Schelling died one and half years later, there even existed (according to letters)[67] a clean copy including up to the 17th (today's 18th to 19th) lecture. This was to be followed by insertions of Schelling's two last presentations to the Academy in 1850 (*On the Dimensions of the Bodily*)[68] and 1852 (*On Adjectives with μὰ*)[69] into the 18th to 20th lectures. Then, in today's 20th lecture, we find a retrospective summary of the development of a purely

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[63] See letter from K.F.A. to his brother Hermann, with the title "Sonntag Morgen" and without date, presumably right after the letter from 15 September 1855 (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Ana 608.B.III., see bibl. *Manuscripts*).

[64] Schelling to K.F.A. on 15 June 1851: "As this will be my last word, it demands a lot of time, and I am still, as I am alone and without help, not finished. God give, I'll be allowed to complete it. [...] The biggest and most important part is complete, but the conclusion is missing. I waited some time for the transcript$_c$ that I am enclosing with this letter. The dear Ulrich [Zech] has had many struggles with it as the original was written hastily and in part I had written only sketches for free delivery" (Plitt, *Aus Schellings Leben* III, 228).

[65] See especially *Calendar 1853* (*BBAW-A-Schelling*, Nr.74; see bibl. *Manuscripts*).

[66] See for example *Calendar 1852* (*BBAW-A-Schelling*, Nr. 73; see bibl. *Manuscripts*). Cf. Buchheim, *Schellings 'Unvollendete.'*

[67] Letter from K.F.A. to Waitz on 12 January 1855: "[...] Regarding my work, I am, so far, making swift progress, as a clean transcript$_c$ up until lecture 17 has been found, which does not require further work (as father himself had declared it ready for publication), other than rewriting or amending the text according to the penciled-in corrections, additions, sentence changes, which are found on almost every page of the first X lectures" (Letter: Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften Datenbank [= *BAdW-D-Schelling*; available via: https://schelling.badw.de/start], folder 12; see bibl. *Manuscripts*).

[68] *Ueber eine principielle Ableitung der drei Dimensionen des Körperlichen*, read at the "Gesammtsitzung" of the academy in Berlin on 19 December 1850 (see SW XI: vi; the presentation is preserved at Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Ana 608.A.3; see bibl. *Manuscripts*).

[69] *Ueber einige mit μὰ zusammengesetzte griechische Adjective*, read at the "Gesammtsitzung" of the academy in Berlin on 5 February 1852 (see SW XI: vi; the presentation is preserved in *Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach* no. 56.1462; see bibl. *Manuscripts*).

rational philosophy up to this point, which was most likely written by Schelling himself (SW XI: 488–489).[70]

We can therefore assume that after Schelling's passing, the manuscripts for lectures 1–20 were complete and their arrangement was mostly laid out. For lectures 21 to 23, as we know them today, relatively mature concepts existed.[71] The already mentioned sheet, paginated 903 and 904, contains a passage, written by Schelling himself, which is virtually identical to a passage in today's 23rd lecture (SW XI: 548–550). This in turn suggests that the manuscript must have been paginated at least up to this point. Everything from there on exists as sketches and notes only. This includes, importantly, the completion of the philosophical introduction (i.e., the end of negative philosophy) until the "demand" (through the individual having become practical), as well as the outlook on the further development of the investigation toward a positive philosophy.

> However, to be noted: This second part of the introduction (ββ) must not displace the treatise on Monotheism [*Der Monotheismus*], with which otherwise the transition to the actual development was made.[72] Rather, once (ββ) is brought to the above-mentioned point (demand for the positive[73] philosophy), it is to be broken off with the following words: "These lectures do not intend to explicate the positive philosophy, rather the principles necessary for the actual establishing of a philosophy of mythology are to be gained on the path contained within

[70] Cf. F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophische Entwürfe und Tagebücher: aus dem Berliner Nachlaß. Vol. 14*, *1849: Niederlage der Revolution und Ausarbeitung der reinrationalen Philosophie*, ed. Martin Schraven (Hamburg: Meiner, 2007). [=*Calendar 1849*] (See bibl. 18.) On page 69, we find a passage that mirrors (almost verbatim) an important part of this summary. In the calendar the wording is as follows: "With a^0 the dilemma arises of an inner-divine or an outer-divine world, outside of God (admittedly only seemingly <as> actually posited or) actualized. [Mit a^0 entsteht das Dilemma einer innergöttlichen oder einer außergöttlichen, außer Gott (freilich bloß scheinbar <als> wirklich gesetzten oder) verwirklichten Welt.]" In the DRP's summary passage, we then find, talking again about a^0, the following: "the dilemma of an inner-divine world actualized in God, or a world actualized outside of God [...] [das Dilemma einer innergöttlichen, in Gott verwirklichten, oder einer außer Gott verwirklichten Welt gegeben]" (SW XI: 489).

[71] This assumption is in line with comments made by the editor K.F.A. in SW XI: 553n1.

[72] Fuhrmans: with which itself (womit selbst).

[73] "+" replaced with "positive" by second hand.

> the granted concept (here that of monotheism) that is assumed[74] and whose preconditions are found by analytical investigation."[75] This is where the earlier treatise on monotheism is situated.
>
> NB. This second part, as far as it exists, is in my handwriting; a large portion, however, is in a transcript$_c$ by Ulrich, which will be very useful for deciphering.[76]

III.f—Commentary:

These instructions make clear that the treatise *The Monotheism* (MOT) is to be the third book of the new order,[77] which makes up the latest systematic architecture, i.e., Schelling's attempt to execute post-Kantian metaphysics. This rearrangement and its methodology establish MOT as neither part of the negative philosophy, which in the above-mentioned sense "ends" with the "demand" for positive philosophy, nor yet the beginning of the positive philosophy.

The Monotheism's intermediary role is rooted in Schelling's insight that in order for MYL to begin, something additional is required that is to be provided by MOT. Specifically, the "actual establishing," i.e., MYL's positive-philosophical explication, requires a justified reidentification of those metaphysical "principles," which were, so far, grounded in pure thought as the

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[74] This new function and method of the treatise on monotheism, namely that it is an "analytical investigation" that operates from a "granted concept" without thereby implicitly already assuming God or even a rationally grounded idea of God, is mirrored in the second lecture in the treatise. Cf. MOT XII: 29–30: "It will now therefore be necessary to find the path from this absolute oneness to the oneness of God as such. […] for that to which I am to go must not yet be posited with that from which I am departing. Our investigation must therefore also move in this direction, insofar as it […] proceeds from absolute oneness, which is based solely on the fact that God is being itself, to the oneness of God as such [Es wird also nun darauf ankommen, von dieser absoluten Einzigkeit aus den Weg zur Einzigkeit Gottes *als solchen* zu finden. […] denn das, wozu ich fortgehen soll, muß mit dem, *von* dem ich fortgehe, noch nicht gesetzt sein. In dieser Richtung hat sich also auch unsere Untersuchung zu bewegen, inwiefern sie […] von der absoluten Einzigkeit, die eben nur darauf beruht, daß Gott das Seyende selbst ist, zur Einzigkeit Gottes als solchen fortgehen soll]." The German term "*angenommen*" is here best translated as "assumed" but would also allow for "accept" or "acknowledge." Here, "assuming" the conception of monotheism as a starting point rests on the legitimacy of the historical prevalence ("granted") of the concept of monotheism.

[75] Interestingly, this passage was ultimately not included verbatim in any published version of Schelling's works. The sense of Schelling's words can nonetheless be found in SW XII: 8. Notably, this passage is part of the treatise on monotheism and not the DRP.

[76] On the different transcripts and their scope, see commentary III.e.

[77] See dictation to Paul 1852 (*Appendix*).

structural principles of all being in the purely rational philosophy.[78] Importantly, what is needed is *not* another justification of mythology as a philosophical subject matter, but rather of the *principles* with which the historical-mythological material is to be dissected. The legitimacy of these principles in the negative philosophy is limited to all *possible ontic being*,[79] which is why their applicability within the positive philosophy[80]—and in that way to all representations of a supposedly real *God* throughout history—must first be established through a *conceptual analysis* of the historically granted concept "monotheism." This need for an additional and systematically different justification is itself a result of the DRP, which shows that God, if he exists, does not belong to the realm of *possible* ontic being.

Later in his testament, Schelling returns to the above-explained issue (cf. commentary III.h) when he instructs dropping from the *Philosophy of Revelation* those passages where he still considered it to be a task of positive philosophy to "motivate that one take God as Prius, ontic being as Posterius, and further, to procure the constitutive principles of ontic being."

> If needed, the individual folio sheets on my desk may help to gain insight into how I wanted to conclude this second part (ββ). However, since they do not contain something definitive throughout, but only notes for my own use, they require careful[81] selection. In order to ease this transition, I would like to add the following, which is

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[78] In December 1852, in a letter to his friend and student Hubert Beckers (professor of philosophy at Munich University as of 1847), Schelling writes about the above-mentioned "principles": "I thank you in particular for the comment on the doctrine of principles or potencies being my metaphysics: it is not only the foundation, but rather the material for the further development of the rational philosophy. How the positive [philosophy], for which this doctrine is equally necessary, will obtain these principles is another question on which I have only just reached clarity myself" (Plitt, *Aus Schellings Leben* III, 241).

[79] The most prevalent translation for *Seiendes/Seyendes* is "that which has being." We have adopted the, in our opinion, more elegant translation, "ontic being," introduced in Brady Bowman, "Force, Existence, and the Transcendence of the Good in Schelling's *Weltalter* (1815)," in *Internationales Jahrbuch für Deutschen Idealismus: Der deutsche Idealismus und die Rationalisten* 14 (2016), ed. Dina Emundts and Sally Sedgwick (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 265–293.

[80] Cf. lecture 13, DRP, SW XI: 299: "Whatever is ontic being, will, albeit in a particular form and one more than the other, be expressed, but each will contain these elements, which are not principles in relation to the principle, but principles in relation to the deduced and can at least serve as access and guidance to the principle itself." This means that the metaphysical "principles" of all ontic being, which receive philosophical justification through complete induction of pure thought in the DRP, must not yet be applied to *the* principle sought after—namely God. That is why their applicability in regard to "God," and everything that would be directly linked to God, must be justified in MOT in a completely different way (i.e., conceptual analysis).

[81] "*besondere*" [special] corrected to "*besonnen*" [careful] by second hand.

understandable for those who read the earlier lectures (beginning with XI).—In the negative philosophy, i.e., in which is the pure[82] science of reason [die reine Vernunftwissenschaft], ontic being [das Seyende] is the prius, that which is ontic being [das, was das Seyende ist] (God) is the posterius. Negative philosophy ends with the I demanding the reversal, which is first pure willing (analogous to Kant's postulate of practical reason, but with the difference that it is not reason, but the I (having become practical), that as personal itself demands personality and says: I want that which is beyond ontic being.) This willing, however, is only the beginning: For that which is beyond ontic being to evince its existence, for there to be a science of it (i.e., a positive[83] philosophy), there must be something against which it evinces itself as existing and this is again ontic being, now as the Posterius or[84] Consequens of the former. See *On the Sources of Eternal Truths* for more on this consequence; Fritz has already received a transcript$_c$ of this treatise.

III.g—Editorial Information: Bibl. 4.1 and 4.

III.g—Commentary:

In the last one and a half years before his death, Schelling did not complete the concluding lectures of the philosophical part of the introduction (=DRP). What he achieved, as also mentioned by K.F.A. in *Schelling's collected works* (SW XI: 553 n1), were more or less comprehensive "folio sheets" ("Conceptblätter"), on which he had sketched out the critical lines of reasoning of the DRP's ending and the upcoming movement to the positive philosophy. K.F.A. used those sheets to compile today's 24th lecture of the DRP, which he did to the best of his knowledge and "according to the suggestions left by the author himself."[85] In doing so, he most likely added his own complimentary remarks and transitions between the original passages.[86]

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[82] Fuhrmans: "in der die Vernunftwissenschaft ist."
[83] "+" replaced with "positive" by second hand.
[84] Fuhrmans: and.
[85] Cf. SW XI: 553n1.
[86] See Müller-Bergen and Sartori, *Die Feder des seligen Vaters*. See also Buchheim, *Schellings 'Unvollendete,'* 22.

The testament, letters, notebooks and calendars[87] show that the editor prominently placed Schelling's latest notes at the end of the 24th lecture. These notes shape the progression of the undertaking toward a positive philosophy by asking two questions, which strongly reflect Schelling's latest revision. Cornerstone and point of reference for this revised latest philosophy, as is also confirmed by the testament, is the treatise *On The Source(s) of Eternal Truths* (=QEW). As an additional part of negative philosophy, Schelling instructed it to follow the end of the "pure science of reason" (=DRP). This means, in turn, that the DRP does not mark the end of the philosophical part of the introduction to the *Philosophy of Mythology*. The "demand of positive philosophy" in the "I having become practical" (= end of the DRP) is followed by an *additional* step of negative philosophy, namely QEW. It takes on the last duty of negative philosophy, which is to answer with purely conceptual means the *first* question: "how is it possible that –A +A ±A can be consequence of A^0?" (DRP SW XI: 570). Only answering this first question brings the philosophical introduction to its true end.

Now, even with the end of the philosophical introduction, we still have not reached the starting point for positive philosophy. As specified in commentary III.f, at this point, the testament instructs postponing again the actual undertaking of the *Philosophy of Mythology*, which one could certainly expect to finally begin. Instead, "the principles necessary for actually explicating the Philosophy of Mythology" must be justified anew by means of the conceptual analysis of monotheism. Schelling's testament, then, provides a type of *movement*—through several distinct steps, from the end of the science of reason to the beginning of a positive philosophy—that is completely different from what the *Berlin Introduction* postulates. Nevertheless, the *Berlin Introduction* has remained the dominant point of reference, and what it laid out as a system has been considered the framework and vantage point for the majority of reconstructions of Schelling's latest philosophy.

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[87] Letter by K.F.A. to his brother Hermann, dated 8 September 1855: "The transition to the academy-treatise [=QEW], however, is, as you will see, indispensable and follows the suggestions of the dear father literally, so that if you were to prefer the treatise to be a simple add-on, it would require to assume and consequently add this transition as its beginning, which in turn would again merge it with the lectures." (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Ana 608.B.III, see bibl. *Manuscripts*). One parallel version of this last step within the negative philosophy is found in K.F.A.'s preamble to SW XII: viiin1. This parallel version we know to be from the above-mentioned notebook, stored in the Berlin archive (*BBAW-A-Schelling*, Nr. 123, 3). This proves, then, that the final part of the DRP's (SW XI: 570–572) raising the two questions (of which the first one, as negative philosophy's last duty, is answered by QEW) is Schelling's own thought from the last years of his life.

b) The concepts of my lectures on the *Philosophy of Revelation* [*Philosophie der Offenbarung*]. The main manuscript is the one where each lecture has the additional label O before or after its identifying number (e.g., O I or X α[88] (X ^{O}). There are two additional manuscripts to the main one which are labeled O^2 and O^3; these are to be considered different versions, different attempts of justification, which allow for comparison and use, but are unsuitable for publishing. In terms of the development of the *Philosophy of Revelation* itself,[89] publication may follow the main manuscript[90] only, although a manuscript (bound) in a different handwriting than mine but corrected by me will be of great advantage. Concerning the actual philosophical basis (as in the *Philosophy of Revelation* the accepted concept of monotheism is no longer to be used as means of development), i.e., to motivate that one take God as Prius, ontic being as Posterius, and further, to procure the constitutive principles of ontic being, one would simply refer to (ββ) (in particular the lecture preparing the transition to a positive[91] philosophy) and consider the whole as proven by what has preceded.

III.h—Commentary:

For the *Philosophy of Revelation* there is one distinct "main manuscript" that is to be used for publication and, as mentioned later in the testament, this manuscript "originated during [Schelling's] time in Munich." Schelling had been continuously reworking, rewriting, and adding to his standard manuscript over several lecture cycles, which ultimately resulted in this main manuscript. Comparison of the SW-version with the *Paulus transcript* of the Berlin lectures of 1841/42 (see below) confirms[92] that the "main manuscript" (which stemmed from Munich times) has been in fact the one which was used for publishing.[93]

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[88] Additionally, a small fragment-letter was added (with a different pencil afterward) turning the approximately-like Greek-α-looking letter decisively into an α. However, "X ^{O}" was added in brackets already in the original. Fuhrmans: "αα X."

[89] Schelling at times uses this title to refer only to the special part of the *Philosophy of Revelation* (SW XIV); see e.g., *Urfassung*, 154.

[90] Fuhrmans: main transcript$_c$.

[91] "+" replaced with "positive" by second hand.

[92] Contrary to Ehrhardt's assumption that K.F.A. had used the Berlin version for publication (see *Urfassung*, 739–741).

[93] The editor (K.F.A.) himself stated, in his preamble to SW XIII: viii: "The Philosophy of Revelation itself was published based on what the author named the main manuscript as well as existing auxiliary manuscripts."

Moreover, the *Philosophy of Revelation* as published in *Schelling's collected works* (XIII and XIV) is—albeit not in all parts[94]—in close to sometimes literal concordance with the *Original Version of the Philosophy of Revelation* (*Urfassung the Philosophie der Offenbarung*), which Schelling had completed and presented in 1831/32, and which was published by Walter E. Ehrhardt in 1992 (cf. bibl. 17). The published version of the *Philosophy of Revelation*, then, is not based on the Berlin version of this lecture, but rather on the Munich version that developed out of the *Urfassung*—except for some important late changes (and deletions) in the general portion, which presumably were taken from the "manuscript (bound) in a different handwriting." This manuscript "in a different handwriting" could very well be the one mentioned in the following paragraphs (see α to (β) below), which contained the Berlin version of the *Philosophy of Revelation* as well as BI. A portion of the clean copy of that manuscript made by Stort survived; Schelling wanted certain improvements and corrections to be transferred to the older Munich version of the *Philosophy of Revelation*.

The other manuscripts O^2 and O^3, which are to be considered "different attempts of justification," most likely stem from Schelling's later Munich years[95] and contain attempts to find a more satisfactory justification and introduction to his positive philosophy than he had been able to provide in earlier versions. The "actual philosophical basis" of the *Philosophy of Revelation* most likely refers to those lectures of the first, "general" part of today's SW-version, in which the "concept of monotheism [...is] used as a means of development" in order to, on the one hand, motivate to (hypothetically) assume "God as Prius" and "ontic being as Posterius" and, on the other hand, to "procure the constitutive principles of ontic being." Those two steps are the systematic "philosophical basis" of the *Philosophy of Revelation* in its *earlier* iterations, and they make up no fewer than lectures 10–15 of today's SW-version. However, K.F.A., as the editor, had a tendency to include *all* seemingly relevant materials in the published version—risking the inclusion of passages that were redundant and even thoughts that the latest revision had rendered outdated. This further obscured the revision of Schelling's latest years, which was indeed not undesired by the editor (cf. commentary III.j).

> Except for this manuscript that originated during my time in Munich, there exist other manuscripts of the *Philosophy of Revelation*:

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[94] Major parts of lecture 16, and a passage highly relevant to Schelling's latest revision from the 17th lecture, seem to be added quite late to the manuscript, as they differ from *Urfassung* (SW XII: 337, 353–354, and 357–359).

[95] Especially the winter semester 1834/35, 1836/37, and1838/39.

(α) one labeled $\frac{B}{O}$, which I read as the *Philosophy of Revelation* in Berlin in 1841/42. The way this manuscript deduces[96] the three principles (–A, +A, ±A) from God, was motivated by the little time I had, as I would not have been able to finish the task without doubling [doublieren].[97] This deduction could therefore only serve as historical reference, as an attempt which was later replaced with the more correct one (see above), regarding which the treatise *On the Sources of Eternal Truths* is the preferred text.[98] Otherwise, this manuscript is to be compared and used alongside the main manuscript. Whether there will be enough time to compare the Paulus version to highlight its falsifications or omissions remains to be seen.

III.i—Commentary:

The manuscript of the *Philosophy of Revelation* mentioned here is explicitly different from the "main manuscript" from Munich times, and was read in winter 1841/42 in Berlin. It was the (in parts) newly written,[99] condensed version of the entire lecture (which used to take two semesters to read) that Schelling intended to be his inaugural presentation of his philosophy in Berlin. This condensed version of the lecture had the following structure:

First, Schelling had written a new introduction[100] for that purpose, focusing on the difference between negative and positive philosophy and the transition from the former to the latter. This introduction (not yet the text later known as the *Berlin Introduction*) attempted to sketch out a negative or purely rational philosophy, and in doing so to *contribute* (albeit only negatively) to the overall course of the positive philosophy—while standing, however, before the actual transition to the positive philosophy.

Second, as can be seen in the *Paulus transcript*, the beginning of the positive philosophy is followed by a new, now positive, deduction of the three

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[96] See *Paulus transcript*, 102–110 and 160–176, on how the obtainment of the potencies takes place in the context of the negative and positive philosophy, respectively.
[97] I.e., shortening; the expression "doubling" stems from the textile industry: Broad fabric panels were folded lengthwise, which doubled the layers of fabric and allowed for them to be rolled up into more compact, i.e., shorter, rolls; this made them easier to store and transport.
[98] The *Source(s) of Eternal Truths* establishes that the three "principles" have an autonomous source of reason vis-à-vis God, which makes human thought and all truth-functional operations completely independent from God (see i.e.: QEW, SW XI: 585).
[99] See Tilliette, *Schelling im Spiegel*, No.534; and *Arnold Ruge Rezension*, in Frank (ed.), *Paulus transcript*, 331–390.
[100] See F.W.J. Schelling, *Einleitung* in *Grundlegung der positiven Philosophie*, *Münchner Vorlesung WS 1832/33 und SS 1833*, ed. Horst Fuhrmans (Turin: Bottega d'Erasmo, 1972), 40 and 44n2.

principles or potencies[101] from the initial concept of the positive philosophy (i.e., "God" as the "pre-conceptual being"),[102] establishing that it is hypothetically possible that creation emerged from these three potencies of God; i.e., ontic being can be fully comprehended through these three potencies.

Third, the concept of monotheism is then used to establish this deduction not only as hypothetically possible but historically plausible. The lecture continues with explications of the possibility of human freedom in God and the emancipation of the individual from God, which in turn resulted in the imposition of mythology on the human consciousness, ultimately ending in the *Doctrine of the Mysteries*. This is where the *special* part of the *Philosophy of Revelation* begins and is developed up to the end of the Johannine ages of the church.

As the testament clearly shows, this Berlin attempt at a *Philosophy of Revelation* was labeled "$\frac{B}{O}$" and not just "B" as suggested in Fuhrmans's publication! Schelling labeled all his newly conceptualized Berlin lectures in this style: the numerator contained the "B" and the denominator contained the special abbreviation for a particular lecture.[103] This is important because the manuscript labeled $\frac{B}{EO}$, which is mentioned in the next paragraph of the testament, could, consequently, *not* have been the conjoined manuscript B *plus* EO (= the complete manuscripts of the Berlin *Philosophy of Revelation*),[104] but rather *only* have been the "Berlin Introduction to the Philosophy of Revelation" as it was read until 1844.

As Schelling clarifies in the testament, he no longer considered the way in which the Berlin version of the *Philosophy of Revelation* deduces the "three principles (–A, +A, ±A) from God" to be satisfactory. Rather, the principles are to be procured differently (following the pattern of the latest philosophy

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[101] Similar to the so-called *Other Deduction of the Principles of the Positive Philosophy* (*Andere Deduktion der Prinzipien der positiven Philosophie*), which K.F.A. published separately in SW XIV: 337–356 (cf. *Paulus transcript*, 160–171).

[102] See e.g., *Paulus transcript*, 161–163.

[103] See *Calendar 1854*, 10: "Worked through all earlier lectures held in Berlin. $\frac{B}{O}$, $\frac{B}{EO}$ and later $\frac{B}{+}$"; and the next day's entry reads: "proceeded as 11. (with $\frac{B}{EO}$)."

[104] Based on Fuhrmans's published transcript of the testament, which contains the incomplete abbreviation "B," Müller-Bergen and Sartori, *Die Feder des seligen Vaters*, 128–129, assumed (as we now see, incorrectly) that "$\frac{B}{EO}$" refers to "EO" *plus* B. For further details on the manuscripts, see Thomas Buchheim, "Der Unterschied zwischen positiver und negativer Philosophie in der Berliner Philosophie der Offenbarung. Eine kontrastierende Betrachtung," in *Schellings Berliner Vorlesungen der Philosophie der Offenbarung*, *Schellingiana 36*, ed. Christian Danz (Stuttgart/Bad-Cannstatt: fromann holzboog, 2026), 35–64, especially 40–47.

of reason), as explained in QEW. QEW demonstrates the consistently thinkable *possibility* of the preconceptual individuality of God having stepped into the "circle" of "reason" (which, as an autonomous potentiality, is completely independent from God) by first "cloaking" himself in it.[105]

> (β) another manuscript labeled $\frac{B}{EO}$ (*Berlin Introduction to the Philosophy of Revelation* [*Berliner Einleitung zur Philosophie der Offenbarung*]) is bundled with a transcript$_c$ of the above (α), which was used for later presentations[106] in 1842 and as it seems another in 1844. This one, too, contains useful material, in particular the corrections. However, the whole $\frac{B}{EO}$ would be unsuitable for printing. Upon reviewing, only the introductory lectures[107] seemed worthy of standalone publication. Of this $\frac{B}{EO}$, apparently the one for the '42-sessions, there exists:
>
> (γ) a second transcript$_n$ in large 4 that, where cited, is cited as the one by Stort, which I also corrected and supplemented as I used it. This also can be of use, however, it requires (where not corrected) comparison with the original as it contains many errors.

III.j—Editorial Information: Bibl. 2.

III.j—Commentary:

As mentioned above, Schelling's debut lecture in Berlin was received poorly. In 1842, as a response to this bad reception, Schelling conceived and wrote a fully revised, much more detailed alternative to the introductory lectures that had been part of the 1841/42 debut lecture. This revised version is what the testament refers to as "another manuscript labeled $\frac{B}{EO}$."[108]

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[105] QEW, SW XI: 588.

[106] The word "Wintersemester" of the original was crossed out with ink (i.e., by the first hand) and replaced with "ein weiteres." "Weiteres" [another] was corrected with "späteres" [a later one] by the second hand.

[107] In Fuhrmans's edition, "(EO)" is added.

[108] As we can see in the manuscript, Schelling remarked in his 1842/43 lectures, at the end of the first lecture (not included in the published version): "I merely announced this lecture as introduction to the philosophy of revelation to show that it would entertain the same topics and questions that I have addressed in my introduction to the philosophy of revelation last winter. The difference will only be that the current lectures can further deal with individual aspects as I now restrict myself to the mere introduction, which was not possible to me back then when I had the whole big matter of the philosophy of revelation as my subject" (*BBAW-A-Schelling*, Nr.106, 24).

Schelling himself called this the "Berlin Introduction to the Philosophy of Revelation," and it contained significantly more than today's *Berlin Introduction*, which had been published (after significant revisions after Schelling's death by K.F.A.) in SW.

In addition to the "introductory lectures" ("Einleitungsvorlesungen"), which we also find in SW, albeit only as the version edited and revised by K.F.A., the "manuscript labeled $\frac{B}{EO}$" contained a series of additional lectures on the historic relation between positive and negative philosophy, which, Schelling claimed, had been misunderstood for so long, most prominently by Hegel and by himself in his own early philosophy. Further, $\frac{B}{EO}$ contained the complete *Other Deduction* (AD), which, as Schelling explicitly lays down earlier in the testament, was not to be published at all: "only the introductory lectures" of the whole $\frac{B}{EO}$. [109] This extensive "manuscript labeled $\frac{B}{EO}$" was a clean copy made by Dr. Alois Stort—Schelling's writer at the time—and, as can be deduced from the two partial manuscripts we have today,[110] comprised no fewer than 497 pages, which is about twice the length of the *Berlin Introduction* published in SW.

However, even this second, more extensive attempt (written as a reaction to his unsuccessful debut lecture) at introducing and justifying the Philosophy of Revelation did—as Schelling himself believed—not fully resolve the critical issues of this particular philosophical undertaking.

For two more years (until the last lecture in the summer semester of 1844), Schelling repeatedly overhauled the *Berlin Introduction to the Philosophy of Revelation* (= $\frac{B}{EO}$), shortening it in some parts and extending it in others: He made countless annotations in the margins, crossed out passages, and added others. The result of this intensive but ultimately fruitless endeavor is what today we find in the two partial manuscripts: "Nr. 106" (≈ BI) and "Nr. 97"

[109] The scope of the 1842/43 lecture, which was the template for the manuscript $\frac{B}{EO}$, can be deduced from the—unfortunately only partially preserved—transcript (by an anonymous attendee) stored in the *Depot Winteler* in the Argau Staatsarchiv.
[110] *BBAW-A-Schelling*, Nr. 106 and *BBAW-A-Schelling*, Nr. 97.

(≈ AD).[111] Schelling's philosophical thinking at the time circled around the following problem: If the negative philosophy ultimately culminates in the *concept* (Begriff) or the *idea* of God, then the positive philosophy must not use this very *concept* to deduce those analytic principles that would allow investigating, in a positively-scientific way, whether God's existence is the actual answer among the possible answers left by the negative philosophy, as using the concept would constitute an inadmissible implication of God within the analytic principles, fatally undermining the soundness of the subsequent analysis. Schelling's continued dissatisfaction with the Berlin introduction ultimately led him to give up on modifying the text and, as laid out in the testament, to exclude it from his latest architecture. Taking a new route in 1846, he focused instead on the previously discussed DRP: an introduction with both a completely different methodology and endpoint.

The "second transcript$_n$," mentioned in γ), was also written by Stort and probably commissioned because Schelling wanted to capture the significant changes and corrections he intended for the lectures of the winter semester 1842/43. Those lectures were then again followed by another round of review and modification in which Schelling seems to have replaced extensive passages within $\frac{B}{EO}$ with the respective passages of the "second transcript$_n$."[112] However, as the testament refers to this "second transcript$_n$," which means it still existed as such at the time when the testament was drafted, we can assume that the pages with the respective passages were not taken out, but rather, were copied and integrated into $\frac{B}{EO}$. This assumption is compatible with the observation that the format of (γ) differs from the format of "Nr. 106."

(c) Concepts for my lectures <u>on the system of philosophy</u>. Which are

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[111] That the preserved partial manuscripts Nr. 106+Nr. 97 in the Berlin archive are indeed the repeatedly reviewed "manuscript labeled $\frac{B}{EO}$" is supported by the fact that the relevant information from the testament is proven accurate: The manuscripts (Nr. 106 and Nr. 97) were used for the 1842/43 lecture (see above, footnote 109) and for the 1844 lecture (on page 55 we find a handwritten remark in the margins: "3rd lecture 1844"). There is also evidence pointing to the fact that conjointly, Nr. 106 and Nr. 97 were added as a (later-written) introductory part to a larger document constituting the Berlin version of the philosophy of revelation as a whole and was the basis for Schelling's more comprehensive lecture in 1841/42. For further information, see bibl. *Manuscripts* and also Müller-Bergen and Sartori, *Die Feder des seligen Vaters*.

[112] In the preserved partial manuscript Nr. 106, we can differentiate the two, because the pages of the original manuscript are paginated by Stort, whereas the pages (copied and) added from the later version are not.

α) the manuscript for the lectures on the *Ages of the World* given in Munich in winter 1827. Only roughly the first lecture is printable in its entirety as it is of historical interest; otherwise only printable in part.

β) one manuscript labeled א [Hebrew Aleph] containing the genetic development of philosophical systems since Descartes. (Again, only parts usable as excerpts.)

γ) one manuscript labeled PP (System of Positive Philosophy).

δ) one labeled BP (*Grounding of Positive*[113] *Philosophy* [Begründung der positiven Philosophie]). Regarding those two, it will depend on whether I will be able to finish[114] the current work (pagina hujus 3,[115] ββ). In this case, out of all these lectures (α–δ) only what would be deemed a supplement or explanation of this last-mentioned work could be extracted. In the opposite case, it must be assessed how much of the parts are usable. The whole must not be printed.

ε) concept of a lecture given in Berlin labeled $\frac{B}{+}$,[116] which, however, requires comparison; may be usable in part.

ζ) a small bundle in large 4 containing p. 93 – 111 of an earlier[117] draft. (Titled: *Tenth Lecture* [Zehnte Vorlesung]; an 11th follows.) Those two lectures address the transition from negative to positive philosophy

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[113] "+" replaced with "positive" by second hand.

[114] Addition on margin by second hand: "NB" and—barely legible—with broad pencil above: "usp. leave some room" (usp. for *uspiam*—somewhere). This could indicate that the second handwriting belonged to K.F.A., who prepared the manuscript for printing.

[115] The transcriber does not refer to page numbers of the transcript, but to the page number of the original.

[116] Based on the mentioning and description of the msc. $\frac{B}{+}$ in K.F.A.'s edition notes ((*BBAW-A-Schelling*, Nr. 78; see bibl. *Manuscripts*), 24 on the right margin), one can almost definitively identify this manuscript with the *Presentation of the Process of Nature* (Darstellung des Naturprozesses), from the winter semester 1843/44. In K.F.A.'s notes, indeed, msc. $\frac{B}{+}$ is explicitly said to include a theory of space. All this said, it must be borne in mind that the *Presentation of the Process of Nature* constitutes only a fragment of a more comprehensive lecture on the "Principles of Philosophy" (the announced lecture title), whose additional content remains unknown. Possibly cf. F.W.J. Schelling, *Sui principi sommi [Introduzione alla filosofia (Semestre Estivo 1839)]. Trascrizione di Garibald Martin Mittermair* in *Sui principi sommi = Über die höchsten Principien. Filosofia della rivelazione 1841/42 = Philosophie der Offenbarung 1841/42*, ed. and trans. Francesco Tomatis (Milano: Bompiani, 2016), 474–679, which is titled "On the Highest Principles" and contains an earlier version of this theory of space.

[117] "earlier" here means in contrast to the last-mentioned, i.e., a draft written before Berlin.

and contain much that is useful on that matter. To be used especially should I be unable to complete the work mentioned under pag. huj. 3[118] sub ββ. But even were that not the case, a lot of it is helpful and could be used, e.g., the long annotation on p. 108, if not used prior.

III.k—Editorial Information:

α) The original manuscript is preserved in a fragmentary state in the Munich university library (System der Weltalter WS 1827/28, 4° cod. ms. 1000, cf. bibl. *Manuscripts*). The first lecture is printed in SW IX: 353–366. There are several transcripts$_n$ of the lecture.[119]

β) Original manuscript of the published text not preserved. Cf. bibl. 27 and 6.

γ) Original manuscript burned. A transcript$_n$ of the 1832/33 lecture ("The System of the positive Philosophy in its Grounding and Execution" [Das System der positiven Philosophie in seiner Begründung und Ausführung]) is published in: bibl. 12.

δ) Original manuscript burned ("Grounding of the Positive Philosophy" [Begründung der positiven Philosophie]); the lecture was first given in WS 1834/35). Possibly: bibl. 26.

IV. Other Manuscripts from Munich Time That Contain Partially Publishable Material

B. In Folio

1) dictation[120] written by a third party,[121] could *correctis corrigendis* be printable in its entirety. This would change the instruction on the above-mentioned manuscript (ζ) since the content, as far as I

[118] Insertion mark in this line, then on the left margin penciled in by second hand: "usp (Platz) [= somewhere (space).]"
[119] F.W.J. Schelling, *System der Weltalter: Münchner Vorlesung 1827/28 in einer Nachschrift von Ernst von Lasaulx*, edited and introduced by Siegbert Peetz (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1990); see bibl. 23.
[120] The here-mentioned dictation is considered to be the "Munich Folio-dictation" (which is also referenced in the dictation to Paul 1852 (*Appendix*)), on the basis of which Schelling established an extensive table of contents in his notebook (*BBAW-A-Schelling*, Nr. 123).
[121] Correction by second hand of "written dictation."

remember, is the same.[122] If, however, I were to leave the frequently[123] mentioned work (ββ) unfinished, this dictation could be used, or could be of help, to *quodammodo* complete what is missing (in particular with regard to the concept of positive[124] philosophy).

2) several manuscripts in my own handwriting containing the beginnings and first attempts at a dialogue on survival and future life.[125] If Fritz wanted to read them, I would be content. He can evaluate whether parts are usable. The whole is to be destroyed if I don't find the time to do it myself.

3) Two notebooks (Collectanea) bound in paper. These contain mostly excerpts (without any further value, except those on Leibniz, which are complete), i.e., more thoughts by others than my own; nevertheless, the second notebook (titled collectanea varii generis) contains a series of critical remarks in Latin on the Arnobii Disputatio adversus Gentes, that still (a new edition has been published in the meantime) contain much that is good and useful. I ask dear Hermann to take on this work, render it printable (in Latin) and to publish it in a collection of my works (if there should be one after my passing) or separately. The edition to which these remarks refer, is the one by (I believe I.C.) Orelli (Zurich). A separate envelope (titled Arnobiana) containing notes, which served me as orientation for talks at the Academy in Munich, for which I used the remarks on Arnobius for some time, might be helpful to this end. My remarks (in poor handwriting) would be incomprehensible without reference to this edition[126] and the accompanying commentary.

IV.—Editorial Information: Bibl. 3 and 20.

V. Early Theologian Works and Calendars (not for publication)

Amongst my stored writings are also numerous separately stored manuscripts, namely

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[122] The modification seems to consist in using this manuscript written by a third hand as the preferred manuscript for publication rather than the aforementioned bundle by Schelling.
[123] Fuhrmans: "above."
[124] "+" replaced with "positive" by second hand.
[125] This refers to the dialogue *Clara*.
[126] Fuhrmans: excerpts.

1) one still written in Tubingen: On the infancy narrative of Christ.[127] I leave that one to Fritz, who can evaluate whether it would not be of at least historical interest to publish this work.
2) an interleaved copy[128] of: "First Outline on a System of Natural Philosophy," as well as the same for the Journal for Speculative Physics Vol. II, issue 2, which I used for lectures, and extensively annotated and commentated for this purpose. Hardly of use, best if destroyed.
3) numerous lectures and booklets I have written myself *a*, on[129] books of the Old Testament[130] (Job, Jeremiah, Psalms, maybe also Isaiah, Proverbs). Original thoughts may be only in the one on Jeremiah and Psalms, that may be used by a descendant. The remaining Schnurrer-notes[131] (namely on the smaller prophets) possibly also useful for a descendant, worth keeping. *b*, on books of the New Testament, partially transcribed$_n$ (Gospel of John) partially transcribed, partially self-written[132] (Galatians, Romans, Ephesians etc.) Fritz[133] may assess whether something can be learned from the latter—it lacks wholly in real understanding,[134] they are thoroughly rationalistic.

4) my calendars extending over many years, containing partially short journal entries, partially notes, excerpts, drafts; hence also original thoughts, much however only half true if not completely false.—Best to be destroyed after review.
5) Maybe some other manuscripts in Folio, not mentioned above, on philosophy or philosophical matters—to be destroyed without further ado.

V.—Editorial Information: Bibl. 24, 11 and 7.

V.—Commentary:

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[127] Underlined by second hand.
[128] In Latin letters, written above by second hand: to be written in German (Sütterlin).
[129] Corrected by second hand.
[130] Underlined by second hand.
[131] A blank space was left in the original and later filled in with the name by second hand. This is a reference to records from sessions from Schelling's time in Tübingen, which were held by the theologian Christian Friedrich Schnurrer (1742–1822) who was Ephorus of the seminar at the time.
[132] Crossed by second-hand and written above: "so."
[133] Fuhrmans: The section beginning with "Fritz" has its own subitem c).
[134] "Verständnis" corrected by the first hand to "Verstand."

Schelling designates his son "Fritz" (K.F.A.), a theologian, to assess whether these theological texts from Schelling's youth, especially the one on the childhood of Christ, are of worth for either the public ["1)"] or distribution within the family ["3)"]. For himself, he maintains in "3b)" that the style of commenting on the bible in those earliest years of his was wholly lacking in "real understanding," as it stemmed from a "thoroughly rationalistic" mindset—"rationalistic" here meaning attempting a philosophical interpretation of biblical episodes based exclusively on the assumption of a rationality-grounded relation between humans and religious content. Schelling notes in retrospect in his historical-critical introduction: philosophy, as it has existed until now, "knows [...] only of rational religion and of a rational relation to God and sees all religious development only as a development of the idea [Idee]."[135]

By that time, Schelling had developed a very different approach: his positive philosophy. This approach takes the biblical episodes to be the legitimate expression of a "real relation of the human consciousness to God."[136] As such, these episodes mean what they say and are in that sense "tautegorical"[137]—a term Schelling introduces and argues extensively for in the historical-critical introduction. Such a tautegorical interpretation completely changes the character of the testaments of the bible: they are no longer merely popularized ciphers of philosophical reason; they have their own authentic character. They are not a metaphorical veil that covers an actual message and meaning; rather, they themselves convey philosophically relevant content.

VI. Closing Remarks and Notes on Talks at the Academy in Berlin

> Having to manage and even to publish my literary estate, which I unfortunately! failed to do, is a terrible imposition on my sons. *Videant quid possint.*[138] Ulrich, the faithful soul, shall be consulted as well. Above

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[135] Richey and Zisselsberger (trans.), *Historical-critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, 174 (SW XI: 250–251).

[136] Richey and Zisselsberger (trans.), *Historical-critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, 174 (SW XI: 250).

[137] Richey and Zisselsberger (trans.), *Historical-critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, 136 (SW XI: 195–196): "[…] everything in it is thus to be understood as mythology expresses it, not as if something else were thought, something else said. Mythology is not allegorical; it is *tautegorical*." The conception of the "tautegorical" is explicitly adopted by Schelling from the works of Samuel T. Coleridge. See Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "On the Prometheus of Aeschylus," in *Shorter Works and Fragments. The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* 11/2, ed. Heather Joanna Jackson and James Robert de Jager Jackson (Princeton University Press, 1995), 1251–1301, 1268n1.

[138] "Let them see what they can do."

all, nothing must fall into the wrong hands! Rather destroyed! Ulrich is also familiar with my latest works and knows how to read my handwriting. He will, I hope, make a neat copy of my talks in front of the Academy of Sciences (in Berlin).[139] Those can, if I don't do it myself, be forwarded straight to printing (not to Mr. v. Cotta, but Perthes in Gotha or Hurter in Schaffhausen or Joseph Max[140] in Breslau)

All correspondences[141] belong to dearest mother, that will outlive me, if not, Paul,[142] who shall decide what to do with each. He shall be consulted in everything, and, regarding practical matters, have the final say, and to whom I hereby transfer the main authority on the overall use of my literary estate.

Berlin, February 1853
Schelling

6. Conclusion

The presentation of the testament and its careful reading and analysis have—we hope—provided sufficient reason in favor of the theses presented in the introduction. In any case, what the facts mentioned in the document prove is that Schelling himself believed in the necessity of the revision of his existing philosophy. What they also strongly suggest is that Schelling's latest philosophy is of a very different structure than anything he had envisioned before.

Furthermore, the testament, together with the attached dictation, leave us with two conclusions regarding this latest philosophy:

1) it *does* exhibit a distinct, systematic architecture;
2) this latest architecture is significantly different—not only in terms of arrangement, but also in the function of its individual components—from earlier conceptions, such as have been presented in the *Berlin Introduction* (BI).

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[139] Especially important for present purposes: *On the Source(s) of Eternal Truths* 1850 (SW XI: 573, see bibl. 4.1) and *On Some Compound Adjectives with μὰ* 1852 (Marbach archive, see bibl. *Manuscripts*).
[140] It is noted in pencil by the second hand but is nearly illegible: "after (?) back to HvC [Mr. Cotta]."
[141] Underlined by second hand.
[142] Underlined by second hand.

Explicitly, Schelling lays out the following order of these architectural components:

1. *Historical-critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* (HKE): Justifying religion (and mythology as religion) as a philosophical subject-matter by ultimately tracing the origin of all mythology to the nature of human consciousness and establishing a *tautegorical* approach as the only legitimate way of philosophically harnessing religion.
2. *Philosophical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology or Presentation of the Purely Rational Philosophy* (DRP): Attempting by means of pure reason to grasp the possible objective content of religion as the intended aim of special metaphysics against the background of general metaphysics, as this aim is *a priori* grounded in the principles for all ontic being. Upon failure, realizing negative philosophy can neither grasp real religion nor fulfill the ambition of special metaphysics. This leads to the demand for a positive philosophy by the individual.
    2.1. *Source(s) of Eternal Truths* (QEW): Establishing the non-contradictory possibility that if God exists, then, despite Him being ejected from the *purely* rational idea,[143] He could nonetheless be source and principle of all possible *ontic* being.
3. *The Monotheism* (MOT): Conceptual analysis of the historically granted concept of monotheism in order to reidentify the three principles, legitimizing their applicability to all real religion, i.e., mythologies and religions of revelation.
4. *Philosophy of Mythology* (MYL): Beginning positive philosophy: investigating and conceptually ordering actual mythologies through the tautegorical lens in order to substantiate a theogonic process in human consciousness as the best explanation for all of mythology.
5. *Philosophy of Revelation* (PO): Methodological continuation of MYL, now focusing on the phenomena of mysteries and revelation, where the theogonic process is superseded by the spread of personal faith: a belief in a specific act of salvation, which distinctly cannot originate in human consciousness, but only in God.

[143] See DRP, SW XI: 566.

Appendix: Letter, Weinsberg, 12 January 1855—K.F.A. to Waitz[144]

In January 1855, Karl-Friedrich-August Schelling (K.F.A.) was corresponding with Waitz on the edition of Schelling's work. A letter from K.F.A. to Waitz dated January 12th had attached a dictation from Schelling to Paul, by which Schelling gave further instructions on the publication of his latest work. K.F.A. provides the following information on the dictations: "Attached to this letter you can find the program dictated by father to Paul in 1852 which, however, only refers to his Novissima." These very "Novissima" are what Schelling in the testament calls his newest works, which is why this program is another helpful building block for a correct understanding of Schelling's latest revision—not least because it was made exactly during the time in which Schelling was working so vigorously on the DRP and the (re)arrangement of his metaphysics. The dictation also contains a remark by K.F.A., which indicates, once again, his desire to reduce the content, and, consequently, reduce the importance of the DRP for his father's earlier philosophy.

We provide a complete translation of this appendix containing the dictation from Schelling.

Dictation by the Late Father 1852

I. Book
Historical-critical Introduction to the *P.*[hilosophy] *of Mythology*
Use MS. [manuscript] written by Stort up to the XI lecture.

II. Book
The purely philosophical, *Presentation of the Purely Rational Phi*[losophy] from lecture [original: Vorles.] XI on: shall remain separated into lectures [original: Vorless.].
Both books can be printed simultaneously after extensive super-revision.

III. Book
Monotheism, partially available under this title. From here on everything else must be deciphered, written as a clean copy and super-revised.

IV. Book
Phi[losophy] *of Mythology* itself, proceed in the same way.

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[144] Last page of a letter by K.F.A. to Georg Waitz, from 12 January 1855 (*BAdW-D-Schelling*, Folder 12); see bibl. *Manuscripts*.

V. Book

Phi[losophy] *of Revelation*. Compare several existing manuscripts [before publishing].

All other booklets, such as the system of the *Ages of World*, *Introduction to the Phi*[losophy], א,[145] P.P.[146] may at most be published in parts, only insofar as they contain particularities that contribute an explanation and that are consistent with the rest; book II is to serve as the benchmark [for this consistency].

Everything else, e.g., study on a philos[ophical] dialogue in folio etc., is to be destroyed without further ado, with the exception of the one dictation from the thirties* in Munich labeled roman E,[147] containing a kind of intr[oduction] to the phi[losophy], which could be printed, if need be. The presentations for the Academy are all ready for printing. The calendars are to be reviewed for anything useful.

* My own remarks[148]

> This MS [manuscript] could be made ready for printing in short notice, roughly 2 months, and it may be very good to insert it between II and III as it has the same subject matter as book II; it, however, uses a different (inductive) method and serves a didactic purpose, which makes it even more helpful for understanding that which is the pure peak of science in II.

[145] See Editorial Information (III.k).
[146] See Editorial Information (III.k).
[147] Munich Folio Dictation.
[148] These are not remarks of Schelling's, but are those of K.F.A.'s.

7. Bibliography: Schelling's Literary Estate

Schelling (Texts and Translations) [in alphabetical order][149]

1. Complete Editions

Historisch-kritische Ausgabe. Edited by Thomas Buchheim, Jochem Hennigfeld, Wilhelm G. Jacobs, Jörg Jantzen, and Siegbert Peetz. 35 vols. Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1976–. [=AA]
Sämmtliche Werke [= Schelling's collected works]. Edited by Karl Friedrich August Schelling. 14 vols. Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta'scher Verlag, 1856–1861. [= SW]

2. Berliner Einleitung (Berlin Introduction)

"Einleitung in die Philosophie der Offenbarung oder Begründung der positiven Philosophie." In *Philosophie der Offenbarung*. Vol. XIII of SW. 1858: 1–174. [= BI]

- → Schelling, F.W.J. "Schelling's Introductory Lecture at Berlin: 15th Nov., 1841." Translated by an anonymous translator. *The Dial: A Magazine for Literature, Philosophy, and Religion* 3, no. 3 (1843): 398–404.
- → Schelling, F.W.J. *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures*. Translated by Bruce Matthews. Albany (N.Y.): State University of New York Press, 2007.

3: Clara

"Ueber den Zusammenhang der Natur mit der Geisterwelt. Ein Gespräch (aus dem handschriftlichen Nachlaß)." In *1816–1832*. Vol. IX of SW, 1861: 1–110.

- → Schelling, F.W.J. *Clara: or, On Nature's Connection to the Spirit World*. Translated and with an introduction by Fiona Steinkamp. Albany (N.Y.): State University of New York Press, 2002.

4: Darstellung der reinrationalen Philosophie

"Zweites Buch. Philosophische Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie oder Darstellung der reinrationalen Philosophie." In *Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie*. Vol. XI of SW, 1856: 253–572. [= DRP]

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[149] The SW-edition is always listed first (if the text is published in this edition), followed by other editions (especially the *Akademieausgabe*; with § and translations with →. We decided to omit the indication of the editor (and the publisher and the place of publishing) in case of the SW-edition since it is always the same: Schelling's son Karl Friedrich August Schelling, published in Stuttgart at Cotta. We also decided to omit the indication of the publisher and the place of publishing in the case of the AA-edition, for the same reasons.

→ Schelling, F.W.J. "Schelling's Late Political Philosophy: Lectures 22–24 of the Presentation of the Purely Rational Philosophy." Translated by Kyla Bruff. *Kabiri: The Official Journal of the North American Schelling Society* 2 (December 2020): 93–135.

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4.1: *Addendum*: Abhandlung über die Quelle der ewigen Wahrheiten

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[150] Cf. Horst Fuhrmans. *Schellings Letzte Philosophie: Die Negative und Positive Philosophie im Einsatz des Spätidealismus* (Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt Verlag, 1940), 327.

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25: Über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit

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[151] The Mittermair transcript (Manuscript: *BAdW-D-Schelling*, Schelling-Archiv Nr.13) is dated summer semester 1839 here. We believe, however, it might stem from 1837/38 (Cf. Fuhrmans 1972, 38). The lecture given in 1837/38 might be a revised repetition, going back to a lecture held in 1834/35.

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Manuscripts

Some documents from BBAW are directly accessible via the following link: https://archiv.bbaw.de/online-ausgaben/ausgewaehlte-dokumente-aus-gelehrtennachlaessen

For other archives: Where publicly and digitally available, links are provided for the individual documents.

Testament

Übersicht meines künftigen handschriftlichen Nachlaßes (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Universitätsbibliothek, autograph No. 29)

Übersicht meines künftigen handschriftlichen Nachlaßes (BBAW-A-Schelling, Nr. 13/1)

Various Manuscripts [in alphabetical order]

"'Andere Deduktion der Prinzipien der positiven Philosophie,' Abschrift von Stort mit Korrekturen von F.W.J. v. Schelling u. von fremder Hand" (BBAW-A-Schelling, Nr. 97)

"Auszüge aus dem Münchner Folio-Dictat; darin auch Exzerpte und Notizen zu Plato, Aristoteles, Kant's Rechtslehre, Montesquieu" (BBAW-A-Schelling, Nr. 123 [= Schelling's notebook titled "1851"])

Course Catalog Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin, summer 1844, 6 (Universitätsbibliothek der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, PA 6466:SH 1840 – SH1858)
https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:kobv:11-708771/fragment/page=10
"Jahreskalender 1852" (BBAW-A-Schelling, Nr. 73) [=Calendar 1852]

"Jahreskalender 1853" (BBAW-A-Schelling, Nr. 74) [=Calendar 1853]

"Jahreskalender 1854" (BBAW-A-Schelling, Nr. 75) [=Calendar 1854]

"'Miscellanea,' mit Ausführungen über Schellings Philosophie der Offenbarung, Ende 1830 Jahre (?)" (BBAW-A-Schelling, Nr. 78) [= K.F.A.'s editorial notes]

"Manuskript zur Vorlesung 'Einleitung zur Philosophie der Offenbarung oder Begründung der positiven Philosophie,' hsl. von Stort mit Korrekturen von F.W.J. v. Schelling und von fremder Hand" (BBAW-A-Schelling, Nr. 106) [= Stort'sche Abschrift]

"System der Weltalter WS 1827/28" (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Universitätsbibliothek Munich 4° cod. ms. 1000)

"Ueber [das Wesen der Materie und] eine prinzipielle Ableitung der drei Dimensionen des Körperlichen [gelesen in der Gesamtsitzung der K. Akad. d. Wiss. zu Berlin den 19.Dec. 1850]" (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Nachlass Friedrich Wilhelm Jospeh von Schelling Ana 608.A.3).

"Ueber einige mit ma zusammengesetzte griechische Adjective [Vortrag]" (Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach, 56.1462)

Letters [in chronological order]

Conrad Philipp Marheineke to H.G.E. Paulus, 29 November 1842 (Universitätsbibliothek der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, autograph No. 678).

F.W.J. Schelling to Ulrich von Zech, 26 May 1851 (Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Chart. A 2085a I)
F.W.J. Schelling to Hermann Schelling, 14 February 1853 (BBAW-A-Schelling, Nr. 863)

K.F.A. to Georg Waitz, 12 January 1855 (Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Ordner 12). [the last page is the *Dictation by the Late Father 1852*]

K.F.A to Hermann Schelling, Weinsberg 8 July 1855 (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Ana 608.B.III.)

K.F.A. to Hermann Schelling, Weinsberg 8 September 1855 (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Ana 608.B.III.)

K.F.A to Hermann Schelling, dated "Sonntag Morgen" without exact date (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Ana 608.B.III.) [presumably just after the letter from September 15th 1855]

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The Official Journal of the
North American Schelling Society

Freedom and Ground: A Study of Schelling's Treatise on Freedom,
by Mark J. Thomas
(Albany: State University of New York Press, 2023)
356 pp., $38.95 (Paperback), ISBN 9781438492995

Reviewed by Carlos Zorrilla-Piña

There are few careers in the history of philosophy that are as long lived or as prolific as that of F.W.J. Schelling; and in the midst of that uniquely prolific career, hardly any work that can more fittingly claim the title of watershed moment than his 1809 *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom and the Objects Therewith Connected*. With his outstanding piece of scholarship, Mark J. Thomas, who has for years wrestled with the depths of this notoriously challenging work, has now done an invaluable service to anyone wishing to share in its heights.

The stated goal of *Freedom and Ground* is to carry out a rigorous and comprehensive examination of Schelling's *Freedom Essay* by reading it as on the whole devoted to giving an answer to the problem of ground. More specifically, the author claims that Schelling tackles the challenge of elucidating human freedom by banking on the plurality of senses in which ground can be thought, and carefully deploying those senses to satisfy the otherwise disparate demands of rational unity and individual self-determination. Following this interpretative line, he convincingly argues that the key to Schelling's approach rests in his insistence that human freedom can only take place embedded in a

multifaceted and complex "network of grounding relations"[1] and can be understood neither by simply turning a blind eye to rational demands of systematicity, nor by having too rigid and reductive an understanding of that in which that systematicity consists. This approach involves going beyond tradition's exclusive understanding of ground as thoroughly determining antecedent—in favor of acknowledging alternative senses according to which ground can likewise operate as enabling condition and begetting matrix. That acknowledgment alone, Thomas argues, allows for compliance with the demand for universal grounding—or the insistence that nothing be surrendered to disjointedness and absolute contingency—precisely insofar as it qualifies its application, where appropriate, in order that those ineliminable features of reality that would otherwise clash with the demand may not only be accommodated beneath its mantle but in fact draw their strength from it.

Schelling's acknowledgment of the multivocity of grounding, Thomas further insists, did not simply allow Schelling to introduce freedom into a system indifferently permissive of it but, much more importantly, furthermore to erect what Thomas refers to as a "system of freedom,"[2] i.e., a theoretical account in which freedom is the central concept in and through which all other elements—even those that at first glance may seem most distant, indeed, more directly opposed to freedom—receive their ultimate interconnection. And if, as Eric Voegelin once proposed, Schelling's greatest strength as a thinker is his unmatched ability to weave skillfully together opposing tendencies under the arc of a higher living unity, then this is a strength on which Thomas' work not only shines light but also itself practices, devoting as much attention to human freedom *per se* as to the titular "objects therewith connected." These objects or issues are legion; but he groups them in three main headings, which he considers each in turn: the problem of pantheism, the problem of evil, and the problem of determinism. The methodical way Thomas' book works its way through the issues that fall under this threefold problematic deserves some attention, however synoptical it must remain.

After stating his goals and carefully setting the stage for their pursuit, Thomas begins by diagnosing the reasons the attempt to thematize freedom within the framework of a system would be problematic in the first place, and also explains in what sense a more nuanced understanding of grounding relations may nonetheless offer the means by which to integrate that tension into the overarching harmony of a living or progressive unity (Ch. 1). The account then concentrates on explaining Schelling's staple understanding of the copula in judgments as an encapsulation of the essential mutual implication of the laws of identity and of the ground, thereby also clearing the way for an

[1] Thomas, *Freedom and Ground*, 249.
[2] Thomas, *Freedom and Ground*, 19.

integration of difference and growth into an otherwise uninformative sameness (Ch. 2). Banking on the foregoing and further drawing out the different possibilities it opens for the characterization of divine grounding, Thomas then follows Schelling in staking the compatibility of divine infinitude with finite autonomy, thereby preempting any pantheistic concerns regarding the alleged effacement of the difference between creator and creature (Ch. 3).

In an effort to understand correctly the intricacies of how Schelling tackles some of the other problems related to human freedom—and most importantly how freedom hangs together with good and evil—Thomas then turns to what is without a doubt one of the greatest contributions of his work. He engages in establishing what he calls "the distinction within the distinction,"[3] by which he means a clarification of the true and yet oftentimes misrepresented meaning of Schelling's famous distinction between the operative modes of essence as ground of existence, and as that which exists on the basis of the former. The case Thomas makes—incidentally against philosophical heavyweights such as Heidegger—is not only lucidly argued, but also well supported with evidence from some of Schelling's other works and two key letters addressed by Schelling to fellow philosophers Georgii and Eschenmayer (Ch. 4). The clarification of the central distinction structuring Schelling's *Freedom Essay* puts Thomas in a perfect position to dive into the problematic of evil and irrationality, both in general as well as in theodicean terms. In this context, the reader is treated to one of the most compelling elucidations of the infamous "*nie aufgehende(r) Rest*," which Thomas rightly links to Schelling's dynamical method of explanation and his transformation of a geometric rationalism into a living one (Ch. 5). After having broached God by way of Schelling's engagement with the question of theodicy, the book then comes face to face with that most enigmatic of Schelling's notions: the Unground or primordial ground. Putting his previous results to good use, Thomas throws a light on the role that contrasting notions such as the Unground, self-affirmation, love, and indifference all play in Schelling's processual characterization of divine revelation (Ch. 6). The final chapter goes back to Schelling's dissolution of the conflict between libertarianism and predetermination by proposing that all actions of a self-conscious individual are genuinely free because ultimately grounded in her "radical *self-determination* through an eternal deed"[4] (Ch. 7). The book is then capped with some concluding remarks pointedly summing up its main arguments and findings.

Although the limits of this review make it impossible to do justice to the strengths and achievements of Thomas' work, I will touch upon those that most struck me. For one thing, Thomas' mastery of Schelling's philosophical

[3] Thomas, *Freedom and Ground*, 111.
[4] Thomas, *Freedom and Ground*, 232.

context when the latter wrote the *Freedom Essay* is obvious. His attention to the dialogues Schelling sustains with his predecessors—including Spinoza, Kant, Jacobi, Fichte, and, perhaps most importantly, Leibniz—considerably enhances the reader's understanding of the complexity of the issues at stake as well as her appreciation of Schelling's proposed solutions. Another crucial strength of Thomas' work has to do with his conviction that Schelling's career is best seen as a "path" on which "continuity and disruption exist side by side."[5] As I mentioned above, Thomas anchors his analysis of the *Freedom Essay* on a close reading of the text itself and very carefully sorts out all the theoretical elements and relations which the latter weaves together; yet he does so without neglecting their long gestation in previous works or the light which their refinement in subsequent works throws on them—something which is admittedly as demanding an exercise as it sounds, but without which no proper understanding of the *Freedom Essay*'s oftentimes sibylline utterances can be gained. It is thus no exaggeration to say that Thomas penetrates the meaning of this pivotal stretch of Schelling's path in a way that only someone who has patiently studied the philosopher's vast corpus and who correctly understands both the unity and vicissitudes of its trajectory can do. Likewise noteworthy, of course, is the book's clarity and rigor. At the outset of his work, Thomas regrets that scholarship around the *Freedom Essay* is oftentimes as cryptic as the essay itself and sets himself the task to arrive at its insights with as much transparency as depth. He fully delivers in this regard. The insights come across sharply and the pages flow with remarkable ease.

In contrast with such numerous strengths, the work suffers from no obvious shortcomings. Pressed to find one, a reader might complain that, while Thomas rightly identifies the philosopheme of the ground as a confluence of two currents of German thought—a rationalistic and a "mystic" one—virtually all attention is devoted to the former, while the latter is left unexplored. This relative omission should not, in my view, be held against the book, given how forthcoming is its author regarding his particular interests and the chosen focus of his work. Less defensible, however, may be the justification offered for this choice. Thomas claims, namely, that though Schelling famously borrowed language from the sixteenth-century mystic Jakob Böhme and others, the insights to whose expression such language is put in service had in fact long been present in Schelling's thought and can be credited to his own work. I would suggest that this diagnostic is somewhat partial, if not simply inaccurate. In my view, the undeniable fact that the ground philosopheme made famous by the *Freedom Essay* had been either previously operative or somehow prepared by Schelling's nature-philosophy is less proof of an alleged lack of meaningful influence by Böhme than it is of

[5] Thomas, *Freedom and Ground*, 14.

how earlier on that influence had found its way into Schelling's thought—albeit indirectly at first. This realization is likely absent from Thomas' analysis because the vehicle for that earlier influence is also overlooked. Indeed, he does not consider to what extent Schelling's nature-philosophy was radically and lastingly transformed by its very early contact with an already heavily "*böhmenized*" Franz Baader, years before the two men personally met upon Schelling's arrival in Munich, and before the latter ever thought to embark upon a study of the shoemaker's writings. Without denying Schelling's own merits, it is reasonable to say that the early and decisive influence Baader facilitated—and which Schelling would, according to his habit, spare no efforts in masking and minimizing—better explains the resonance of both the nature-philosophy as well as of the ideal counterpart with which Schelling would subsequently pair it in 1809 with several features of Böhme's thought beyond mere language and imagery.

The foregoing point nonetheless concerns the—intellectually speaking—minor issue of authorship and has no bearing whatsoever on the lucidity of the analysis to which Thomas subjects the philosopheme of the ground in Schelling's thought. At the end of the day, I know of no better study of Schelling's 1809 *Freedom Essay* than Mark Thomas'. And I believe one would be hard pressed to come up with other works that so cogently advance an understanding of the depth and complexity of the problem of ground, or show just how far its incidence in other philosophical problems reaches, as Mark Thomas' does—a statement that may be extended to the context of analytical philosophy without fear of having gone too far. That Thomas' contribution to this central philosophical problem unfolds in the context of examining one specific figure in one specific tradition of thought does not mean that his contribution's validity is thereby diminished; it much rather means that he has given us two excellent standalone books in one.

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Political Eschatology,
by Sean J. McGrath
(Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2023)
176 pp., $27.00 (Paperback), ISBN 9781666738094

Reviewed by Matthew Nini

In *Political Eschatology,* Sean McGrath embarks upon a demanding intellectual journey and, as its title suggests, breaks through the narrow confines of academic disciplines in order to think freely. The title itself may pose a challenge to the uninitiated reader: what is "political eschatology"? The *eschaton* refers to the end of all things and, in the Christian tradition in which it is most prevalent, to the end times—during which the final act of God's revelation will play out. But what does it mean to think eschatology in conjunction with politics? It is here that McGrath follows in the footsteps of some of the great political thinkers of the twentieth century: Eric Voegelin, Ernst Bloch, Jacob Taubes, and Günter Anders all used the theological concept of the eschaton to think the political moment in which they lived. McGrath elaborates his own compelling theological ideas about the eschaton and then proceeds to think through the crises of the twenty-first century using the eschatology he has developed. The preface and first long chapter, entitled "Endtime," sets the stage by exploring eschatology and its intellectual history. Thereafter, essays on consumerist culture, the environmental crisis, the pandemic, and hospitality follow. While a part of the author's strategy is to denounce the injustices of today and link them to a historical and philosophical lack of imagination, the

tone is ultimately prophetic. McGrath is leading us through a difficult exercise in thinking the future without determining it in advance, something that requires a major paradigm shift. This change in attitude, this conversion or *metanoia*, is what the book's multifaceted strategy aims to effect.

The meditative preface opens with the thought onto which the reader must hold fast the better to understand the peregrinations to come: "the present world is a thing that could and should be other than it is."[1] To think eschatologically, McGrath says, in linear time and with the end in mind, implies beginning one's thinking with a negation (here he is following the precedent set by some of his favorite sources: the Lurianic Kabbalah, Oetinger, and above all, Schelling). This negative beginning implies rejecting the world as it is. This thought of "a road not taken at the inception of early-modern history"[2] is one that is acknowledged in other disciplines: historians of architecture, for example, are steadily coming to the realization that the modern is not the product of historical necessity—the buildings we live and work in, often square, grey, and unwelcoming, need not have looked that way; the aesthetic of modernity could have been different.[3] But for philosophers, this seems to be a more difficult thought to entertain. Later, McGrath will posit that this is because of the pervasive influence of Hegel, and those who would see his philosophy as building up toward "the end of history." In different terms, McGrath will end up repeating an accusation made against Hegel by one of his most astute exegetes, Ernst Bloch, who argues that there is no room for the new, for a "*novum*" or completely unprecedented and unpredicted event in Hegel, because the latter has been enthralled by the idea of anamnesis.[4] This "spell of *anamnesis*" is ultimately caused by an Aristotelian metaphysical principle that McGrath rejects: confusing potency with possibility—i.e.,, placing possibility as the highest and the first and watching the world tick along like a cosmic watch according to the set principles established from the beginning. In McGrath's Schellingian framework, what is historically last is the highest, not what came at the beginning: the world as a totality can only be judged once one has reached the end of all things—the *eschaton*—and before then, anything is possible.

This theoretical framework is central to the manner in which McGrath seeks to interpret the crises of the present age. What it ultimately yields is an account of the secularization of western culture, a process serving as the ether in which the crisis is submerged, and which can be best understood eschatologically. Drawing on a plethora of canonical sources (Max Weber, Karl

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[1] McGrath, *Political Eschatology*, viii.
[2] McGrath, *Political Eschatology*, viiin2.
[3] See Kenneth Frampton, *The Other Modern Movement: Architecture 1920–1970* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022).
[4] Ernst Bloch, *Subject—Objekt, Erläuterungen zu Hegel* (Frankfurt: Suhrhamp, 1962), 481.

Löwith, Marcel Gauchet), McGrath argues that it is Christian theology that yields the conception of time that makes modernity possible, which possibility in turn allows for the rise of secularism. While the ancient world mostly conceived of time as cyclical and the role of human agency therein negligible, Christianity, following the example of Judaism, sees time in linear fashion. Not only the world we live in but time itself has a past, a present, and a future, and we are inevitably caught up in the middle of it, living in the present. In theological terms, God created the world out of nothing; it then fell prey to sin and evil; the son was meant to redeem it; and now we live in an age of redemption, the age of the spirit, at some point between the middle and the end. But it is the anticipation of the end that is decisive. To be a Christian is to wait for the second coming of Christ, something that the first disciples thought would happen within their lifetime. But when the last eyewitness of Christ's ministry died, the community of believers was forced to reinterpret the *eschaton*. In the synoptic gospels, written from when apostolic witnesses were still alive, Jesus says: "Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things [i.e., the signs of the eschaton] have happened."[5] By the time the Gospel of John is written, the first generation has passed away, and the Christ has not returned. A new strategy is needed. Writes McGrath: "Eschatology in John is no longer a teaching about what will happen, it is primarily a teaching about how to live now."[6]

This interpretive shift is the birth of modern eschatology. In its wake, modern political thought, beholden to the paradigm of linearity and finitude, must find a way to think the eschaton. Whether tragically or comically, in Armageddon or Utopia, the way things are will come to an end, and this end is ultimately the possibility-condition for thinking how society could be different than it is. Political revolutions are therefore "disavowed eschatology"[7] or, to use Eric Voegelin's famous phrase, an immanentizing of the eschaton.[8]

Following Max Weber and Marcel Gauchet, McGrath sees the development of liberalism as being a product of the political engagement with eschatology. "From biblical voluntarism, through medieval nominalism, to Lutheran acosmism, it is a short step to Protestant secularism, liberalism, and secular humanism."[9] McGrath leans heavily on Weber's account of the Protestant work ethic as a driving force in the liberal-capitalist worldview, ultimately leading to consumerist culture, the underlying disease that gives rise to modernity's crises like so many symptoms: our appetite for endless

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[5] Matt 24:34–35; Mark 13:30–31; Luke 21:32–33.
[6] McGrath, *Political Eschatology*, 9. See also John 16:33.
[7] McGrath, *Political Eschatology*, 10.
[8] Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics: An Introduction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), 120.
[9] McGrath, *Political Eschatology*, 16.

consumption is what objectifies and commodifies everything we meet, whether nature or neighbor. Crucially, McGrath reminds us, none of this ever stopped being about religion; the theological register is more relevant now than ever, since our greatest ill— consumerism—is ultimately a perverted expression of a distinctly Christian religious sensibility. "Religion plainly did not disappear in the late-twentieth-century developed world," he writes. "Rather, it changed form. Consumers have not necessarily ceased believing in God; many of them have become curators of their own religious experiences."[10]

In making his critique of consumerism, McGrath is at his best. Drawing on sources as varied as Heidegger, Žižek, and Wilfred Sellars (one feels that a protracted engagement with Adorno, who has similar complaints, would have been productive, but would have required much additional space in order to accomplish), McGrath makes a strong argument about the emptiness of consumerism as successor to Christian community:

> Consumerism is grounded in the belief in the individual's endless freedom to upgrade his identity through the purchase of mass-produced products and thereby achieve "recognition" and perhaps, if the ad makers are to be trusted, material beatitude. The desire of the consumer is endless, and therefore infinitely lucrative because it is purely negative: it consists in an unlimited capacity to choose on an ontologically limited plane: we are "free" to choose, not our forms of political organization or the economic structures of our societies, but from an endless variety of material goods. The ethos of the age, the ethos of consumption, is not optional. […] The absence of real decision is crucial to the logic of consumerism, which demands of the consumer an infinite effort to find satisfaction in that which can never satisfy. […] The hysteria of consumption is a situation of maximal unhappiness, for we are like the gerbil on the wheel that can never get anywhere no matter how fast it runs, and at the same time, and by virtue of that unhappiness, in a situation of maximal profit to finance capitalism.[11]

This state of affairs is one in which capitalism's need for constant growth collides with the infinite desires of the human heart. Capitalism perpetuates constant growth through commodification: things that were once off-limits to the logic of the market (healthcare, romantic relationships, clean water, human dignity) acquire a price tag so that the capitalist does not run out of things to

[10] McGrath, *Political Eschatology*, 17.
[11] McGrath, *Political Eschatology*, 95.

sell. The human being itself winds up broken down into its constitutive parts, marketed appropriately and sold like derivatives on the stock market. Anyone who has ever used a dating app should know that they have gone looking for love using the same consumerist mechanisms used to sell livestock insurance.[12] The mystery of the encounter with the Other, the mystery of personhood—Christianity's great contribution to anthropology, McGrath would want to say—has suffered the fate of the Gospel's seamless garment: at best, torn up and sold piecemeal; at worst, raffled off wholesale. Even the earth itself, described by Plato in the *Timaeus* as a living thing, a "*zōon*" with a soul, the "World-Soul," can be cut apart, liquified, sold, and combusted into noxious remains.

But McGrath is not criticizing capitalism or its counterpart liberalism per se. He would seem to think (and this reviewer is inclined to agree) that these can be salvaged. The problem is that a number of wrong turns were taken along the historical trajectory that led from medieval-feudal Christendom to liberal-secular modernity. Each moment in the development McGrath evokes has something about it that can be commended. But each also contains a moment of tragedy. Two of these tragic moments, crucial for the consumerist turn, are the separation of the individual from the communal; and the reduction of all knowledge to *Technik*: I am alone with my desires, and the only logic according to which I can consider them is that of the buying and selling of external fabrications, the idols that enchant us but leave us longing for more.

But the most original aspect of the book is not this diagnosis of the problems of the modern mindset, but the invitation to think this progression differently. Rather than seeing the melancholy of consumerism as the inevitable end of history, McGrath emphasizes that the ambivalent nature of every turn in history means it could have been otherwise: liberalism realizes Christianity's drive to recognize the dignity of the individual, but that same individualization opens the floodgates to self-commodification in consumer capitalism. Realizing that the present is not as it should be, and could have been otherwise, is the first step in thinking a tenable future. To say, for example, with Max Weber that Christianity secularizes itself does not mean that the Gospel of Christ tragically and ridiculously ends in the Gospel of Consumption. What if the self-secularization of Christianity were, as visionary thinkers such as Joachim de Fiore thought, something else? Rather than its self-destruction, one could see the "end" of Christianity as a total interpenetration of Christ's message with its environment, an actualization of Christian charity that announces precisely what the Christ preached—neither a Church nor a Corporation, but the *Basilea tou Theou*, the Kingdom of God.

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[12] Barnaby Lewer, "To Fall in Love, Click Here," in *Jacobin*, February 2016. https://jacobin.com/2016/02/internet-dating-commodification-love-valentine

This Kingdom is not a definite place with a definite set of norms, but an open future into which one has a kind of prophetic insight. To paraphrase Schelling, who provides the deepest philosophical inspiration for this book, the past can be known, but the future can only be intuited, and what is intuited cannot be recounted as something known but rather prophesied.[13]

In this vein, the book is ultimately a long fight between two rival conceptions of time: Hegel's end of history, which leads inevitably to a final worldview, the tyranny of materialist consumerism; and Schelling's eschatology, an open future that gives us a space to imagine a different world. As I read, however, I imagined a different opposition—not Hegel vis-a-vis Schelling, but anachronistically, between Nietzsche and McGrath. The former appears briefly in the first chapter, accusing Jesus of being a hater of life and demanding that we have the courage to think the thought of recurring time.[14] Here it is hinted that Nietzsche has no stomach for eschatology. Elsewhere, this becomes clearer. For what McGrath calls the beginning of eschatological thinking—the recognition that the world is not as it should be—Nietzsche calls nihilism.[15] Nietzsche would have us embrace the world as it is, as it has always been, as it shall always be. One thinker sits up in the mountains of Sils Maria. He cannot see the landscape through the fog. It does not matter—beyond it, there is only more of the same. Another sits in a cabin on the coast of Newfoundland. He, too, cannot see through the fog. But he hears the sound of the ocean, and he imagines distant shores.

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[13] F. W.J. Schelling, *Die Weltalter. Fragmente. In den Urfassungen von 1811 und 1813*, ed. Manfred Schröter (Munich: Biederstein, 1946), 3.

[14] McGrath, *Political Eschatology*, 39.

[15] "Nihilist ist der Mann, der beurteilt, dass die Welt, wie sie ist, nicht sein sollte und dass die Welt, wie sie sein sollte, nicht existiert. Daher hat Existenz (handeln, leiden, wollen, fühlen) keine Bedeutung: daher ist das Pathos des 'Vergeblichen' das nihilistische Pathos – und eine Inkonsequenz des Nihilisten."("Nihilist is the one who judges that the world as it is should not be, and that the world as it should be does not exist. Therefore existence (action, suffering, willing, and feeling) has no meaning: thus the pathos of 'futility' is also the pathos of nihilism — and a contradiction on the part of the nihilist.")
Nietzsches Werke. Vol 9: *Versuch einer Umwerthung aller Werthe, aus dem Nachlaß 1884–1888*, 2 (Leipzig: C.G. Naumann, 1906), 60, translation mine.

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Unfinished God: The Speculative Philosophical Theology of Ray L. Hart,

ed. Alina N. Feld and Sean J. McGrath
(Edinburgh University Press, 2024)
368 pp., $140.00 (Hardback), ISBN 9781399532211

Reviewed by Matthew Nini

The *Festschrift* (or, the essays presented to a scholar on the occasion of their retirement or an anniversary) is a tradition that never quite took root in the English-speaking world. The reader of the present volume might therefore ask why Ray L. Hart, professor emeritus of religion at Boston University, has been presented not only with a *Festschrift*, but one that is of the most illustrious kind: the book is not only dedicated to Hart; all of its essays are about his work. As this edited volume attests, whoever he is, he has gathered unto himself an eminent readership in religious studies, philosophical theology, and the philosophy of religion.

Hart made his theological debut in 1968. To read his book from that year, *Unfinished Man and the Imagination*, is an exercise in historical divination: Is Ray L. Hart a *soixante-huitard*, one of those set on upending the established order? Is he a "French theorist," intoxicated by Derrida and the like, as were his peers Paul de Man and John Caputo? Is he a "death of God" theologian, like his late friend Thomas J.J. Altizer? The young Hart remains something of a chameleon, able to speak the language of his age, yet still thinking in a register

that is entirely his own. Ultimately, *Unfinished Man and the Imagination* is an attempt at a philosophy of revelation. God is revealed through events, and one comes to grips with these events in language. To borrow a term from Gerhard Ebeling (and Hart has more in common with contemporaneous European thinkers like Ebeling than with his American peers), revelation is a *Wortgeschehen*, a word-event. More attuned to the contemporary issues of Lutheran theology than were his stateside peers, Hart recognizes that Martin Heidegger and Rudolf Bultmann had reached an impasse in trying to provide revelation with a hermeneutics, and that this impasse was the event. In *On the Way to Language* (*Unterwegs zur Sprache,* 1959), Heidegger admits that he had been working on the idea of the event (*Ereignis*) and its relationship to language for more than two decades following his *Introduction to Metaphysics* (from the winter semester of 1933–1934), but that he had not made much progress.[1]

Hart's response is a retrieval of romantic hermeneutics, beginning with Kant's Third Critique, but more poignantly—and for the first time in English——of F.W.J. Schelling's mature philosophy. To admit of a divine revelation in and through language is to open the door to the idea of a God who speaks Himself, who is both telling and told, and about whom the last word cannot be decided until the story has reached its conclusion. Both the telling and understanding of Revelation are the province of the imagination, creating a divine imaginary that has us more than we have it. Hart writes at the outset of his 1968 book: "Theology lives out of the future, understands out of the past."[2] Did Hart know that he was echoing a sentiment expressed by Schelling in the lectures on the Philosophy of Revelation almost a century earlier (SW XIII: 175–530)? He certainly meant it in an equally radical way: the event-character of existence, which must be imagined in order to be lived, understands itself as it constructs itself—life is always ongoing, the human

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[1] Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 8.

[2] Ray L. Hart, *Unfinished Man and the Imagination* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1968), 44. On this point, I would like to offer an alternative interpretation to that of some of the contributions to this volume (*Unfinished God*): It is not, on my reading, so much that Hart has decided to consciously dispense with the tradition of divine impassibility. Rather, he has—in step with post-war European thinkers like Bultmann, Ebeling, Ernst Fuchs, Gabriel Vahanian, and Stanislas Breton—realized that the language of subject and object is hermeneutically defunct as far as God is concerned. Indeed, the language of *I* and *Thou*, so central to both the mystical and moral discourse of the pre-War generation and held over by many afterwards, is abandoned by each of these thinkers on the same grounds, more or less: i.e., that it objectifies God. Hart's unique path toward this conclusion is through negative theology and Teutonic-Lutheran mysticism. Put simply, when we stop worrying about a dogmatic subject–object distinction, impassibility becomes a moot point: the God who creates us is the God who reveals Himself to us and also the God who suffers with us on the Cross—though not all at the same time, or under the same aspect, because these are different moments of the divine story.

being is unfinished, and in a certain respect, so is God. Hence, to call *Unfinished Man* an example of "death of God theology" misses the mark. Hart can agree with Altizer that God is nothing, but only some of the time: the event-character of revelation, according to which God is both telling and being told, means that God must relate to some kind of principle of negativity, which would have to be taken up into the divine essence itself.

Unfinished Man clearly had unfinished business, and that business was the role of nothing, of the *nihil*, in the divine. Hart would spend half a century thinking through this question, publishing his magnus opus, *God Being Nothing: Toward a Theogony*, in 2016.[3] The book is a difficult one. Does its dense language represent the last moment of post-structuralism before its disappearance? Again, Hart goes his own way. *God Being Nothing* (*GBN*) is a critique of ontotheology—once more, in line with other theologians of Hart's generation, but in a register closer to post-Heideggerian systematizers (like Karl Rahner or Ferdinand Ulrich). Heidegger, however, does not play a major role in *GBN*. Hart rather makes his point by leaning on an apophatic mystical tradition—in particular, Meister Eckhart, Jacob Boehme, and Schelling. And the point he is making is this: Already in *Unfinished Man*, revelation is described according to a temporal sequence—there *was* a time when what *is was not*; there *will be* a time when what *is* may *not be*. *GBN* will make explicit that this nothing—the *nihil* out of which creation comes in the dictum "*creatio ex nihilo et non sed deo*" [creation out of nothing and only by God] is internal to God. This, of course, is the move, following Boehme, that Schelling has already made: God's ground is within Him, the relative nothing (in Platonic terms, "*me on*" and not "*ouk on*") out of which he Himself emerges, His own nature of His "past," and out of which He has created the world. Hart, however, is aware that this position slips easily into pantheism. The most obvious solution (following Schelling) would be to rehearse arguments about parts and wholes, backgrounds and foregrounds, antecedents and consequents. But from the inception of his work, Hart has been a thinker of the given—the starting point in *Unfinished Man* is not the God who reveals or the Godhead out of which He came, but the revealed event, "inverbalized" as language. Hart's radical solution, then, is to de-emphasize the temporal scheme. The present is not simply what "is," the fruit of a before that it is "not." Rather, the meontic spirit of the *not* is always there with being as its shadow-companion, with both Being and Nothing emerging from the mysterious Godhead: the indeterminate, groundless *turba*, for which creation and destruction are simultaneous.

The crux of the matter, then, the hidden key that unlocks *God Being Nothing*, is not so much the *nihil* but the "*ex*" in the formulation *creatio ex nihilo*.

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[3] Ray L. Hart, *God Being Nothing: Toward a Theogony* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

This little word stands for what abides between immanent and economic trinities; time and eternity; God and man. It is the space from nothing to nothing, my nothing to God's, which draws me up to what is highest—this is the Hartian epectasy [*epektasis*], the antidote to nihilism that we are cautiously promised at the beginning of *GBN*; the nothing we see deep in ourselves is no reason for despair, but rather, following Eckhart (the patron saint of Hartian theology), the true way to God. *God Being Nothing* is a commanding work of speculative metaphysics, one that deserves to be likened to Whitehead's *Process and Reality*, Rahner's *Spirit in the World*, or Ulrich's *Homo Abyssus*. And while the casual reader might mistake its difficult language and occasional neologisms for a work of post-modernism, it eschews what is fashionable in favor of what is really challenging—to think what Leo Strauss, in the closing pages of *The City and Man* (1964), describes as the most unavoidable question for philosophers and theologians alike: *Quid sit Deus?*[4]

Beyond its objective contribution to questions in philosophy and theology, the present volume, edited by Sean McGrath and Alina Feld, is significant in its role in generating a body of literature on Hart's work. This significance does not mean, however, that its contributors—many of whom have had remarkable intellectual careers of their own—do not struggle to interpret and come to terms with Hart's work, especially in *GBN*. Indeed, this collection contains more interpretations of Hart's work than the number of chapters (eighteen) in which they are expressed, a testament to Hart's originality: just when one thinks one has pinned him down, he escapes again. The result is a kind of banquet of Hartian themes to which the reader is convened. Three main examples suffice to make the point.

Cyril O'Regan tries to weigh the sources that contribute to *GBN*'s argument. As a Catholic reader of the same German mystics in which Hart is interested, O'Regan reminds himself as much as he does the reader that Hart is a Protestant, steeped in the hermeneutic tradition that begins with Schleiermacher. I have already tried to situate Hart in the protestant theology of his German contemporaries. O'Regan does the same, adding Tillich to the list, apposite because of Hart and Tillich's shared interest in Schelling. The real question, however, is how to situate Eckart, Cusa, and Boehme in *GBN*. While they appear to be on equal footing, O'Regan gives Boehme the edge: "the basic grammar of negative theology adopted by Hart is that of Boehme's evolutionary ontotheology."[5]

Sean McGrath's contribution focuses on the Boehme-Hart connection. Hart "reopens the question concerning the coherence of

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[4] Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1964), 241.

[5] Cyril O'Regan, "A Meontological Speculative Theology: God Being Nothing," in *Unfinished God: The Speculative Philosophical Theology of Ray L. Hart*, ed. Alina N. Feld and Sean J. McGrath (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2024), 22–23.

evolutionary monotheism," the idea that God is, in Hart's words, a "determination process," the latter an idea that comes from Boehme.[6] It argues for a "primordial and dynamically developing duality in God" as the "*explanans* of the dualities manifest in living nature."[7] Boehme, ignorant of Latin theology and the importance of divine impassibility (and presumably also of Neoplatonic ideas about Being) sees in Scripture the unfolding of evolutionary monotheism, and therefore glimpses the personhood of God in a more real way than do the school theologians. Both Hart and McGrath find their way back to this position via Schelling; both can present their speculative metaphysical systems as a Schellingian answer to the tired Hegelian one overburdened by the end of history: for Boehme and Schelling, God has a future, and no prophet dare say precisely what it is. But there is something behind this shift that is much more profound, a dialogue between contemporary thinkers, each elaborating his own metaphysics. In his books on psychology, nature, and eschatology, McGrath has adopted from Schelling what he calls "the law of ground," using it as a tool to transform and renew these subjects.[8] Would Hart be able to follow McGrath in this endeavor? I suspect that he would have reservations about the law of ground's dependence on the logical ideas of antecedence and consequence, categories too close to classical metaphysics for his sensibilities. More profoundly, I am convinced that Hart bursts out of the Kantian frame in *GBN*, denying the hegemony of time (as a form of inner sense) over the self-telling tale of revelation. When God becomes, the measure of becoming has been disturbed: *time is out of joint*, as Hamlet says, and what emerges is the chaos that brings life, what Hart calls "torbic energeia." To this mixture, one must add the ambivalent relationship of both Hart and McGrath to Martin Heidegger, who is so close to yet so suspicious for both thinkers, albeit on different counts. One could—and should—write an essay on McGrath and Hart.

In a remarkable chapter that echoes Hart in both spirit and originality, Tyler Tritten reminds us that for Hart, "theology is theogony," and then argues that "Hart's theology will come into view as a radically empirical theology in which God has no a priori but only a posteriori attributes. Hart's way of thinking the nihil thus avoids modern materialism and nihilism, which is the explicit objective of his theogony."[9] Tritten argues that, for Hart, all divine events are divine contingencies that can only be narrated, not classified,

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[6] Sean J. McGrath, "Ray L. Hart and the Böhmian Tradition," in *Unfinished God*, 93.
[7] Sean J. McGrath, "Ray L. Hart and the Böhmian Tradition," in *Unfinished God*, 94.
[8] Sean McGrath, *Schelling and the Dark Ground of Spirit* (London: Routledge, 2012); Thinking Nature: *An Essay in Negative Ecology* (Edinbrugh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019); *Political Eschatology* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2023).
[9] Tyler Tritten, "Seeing From the Centrum: Theogony as Empirical Theology," in *Unfinished God,* 238–239.

understood, or explained away. The upshot is a God who, rather than being *esse ipsum subsistens* [self-subsisting being], is highest freedom, acting not out of His being, but out of this primordial freedom.

The variety and originality illustrated by these three essay samples continues through the eighteen chapters of the book. Douglas Hedley situates Hart's theology archetypically, through the biblical image of the wheel of Ezekiel. William Desmond sees in Hart an original use of what he has called "metaxology." Nicholas Genevieve-Tweed offers a necessary investigation into the similarities between Schelling's 1811 *Ages of the World* and Hart's theogony. And Nathan R. Strunk provides an introduction to the key themes in *GBN* that will be necessary reading for all students of Hart. This is only a partial and aleatory sample from a volume filled with rich contributions—one could go on. But I prefer to let the book speak for itself, recommending it to all those interested in the question of who God is, "*quid sit Deus?*" For readers, few pleasures are as great as discovering an overlooked thinker and finding that he is brilliant. It is my hope that this collection will be the occasion for many to discover Ray Hart—and to dive headlong into both of his monographs.

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WORKSHOP REPORT
"Schelling and the Frankfurt School"
Frankfurt am Main, June 16-17, 2025

Alexander Legebeke

Summary

This report offers a summary and critical reflections on the two-day workshop "Schelling and the Frankfurt School," held in Frankfurt on June 16–17, 2025, and co-organized by Martin Saar, Kyla Bruff, and Tobias Heinze. Five presentations explored intersections between Schelling's philosophy and key figures of the Frankfurt School, followed by a panel discussion and two reading workshops on Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*[1] and Schelling's Freedom Essay.[2] Across sessions, participants explored questions of aesthetics, ecology, materialism, psychoanalysis, social philosophy, and freedom, revealing both convergences and divergences that point toward new research directions.

[1] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1966). English translation: Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1973).
[2] F. W. J. Schelling, "Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit und die damit zusammenhängenden Gegenstände," in *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. K. F. A. Schelling, I/7 (Stuttgart/Augsburg: Cotta, 1856–61). English translation: F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006).

Introduction

The workshop aimed to reassess the philosophical affinities between Schelling and Frankfurt School thinkers, in light of contemporary ecological crises and renewed interest in the philosophy of nature. Throughout the workshop, participants explored how Schelling's dynamic account of nature and his notion of the unconscious inform Critical Theory's commitments to negative dialectics, social mediation, and material analysis. Over the course of two days, presentations alternated with open debate, culminating in a panel and discussions that assessed the promises and challenges of a Schelling-inspired critical philosophy.

1. Sean McGrath: *Marcuse's Critique of the Neo-Freudians* and *The Schellingian Unconscious*

McGrath began by tracing the three commitments that unite Marcuse and Schelling: the rooting of reason in non-rational drives, the contingency of structural injustice, and an eschatological hope for communal transformation. Nonetheless, McGrath argued that Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization*[3] overextends its premises, namely, that civilization is repressive and assumes a realizable classless society, a position that Schelling would contest. Furthermore, he identified three Schellingian models of the unconscious, i.e., *naturphilosophische*, tripartite-personal, and collective-mythological, and showed how each model deepens pessimism about human self-fulfillment without an "other-power." He concluded by proposing a Schelling-inspired political philosophy of "productive dissociation," which preserves Marcuse's transformative hope while reasserting the necessity of "grace" over self-emancipation.

2. Philipp Höfele: *How to React to the Ecological Crisis? An Attempt to Respond with Schelling and Adorno*

Höfele revived the classical call to "follow nature (*naturam sequi*)," demonstrating how Schelling's and Adorno's aesthetic theories ground an ecological ethics that neither reduces nature to resource nor dissolves it into social mediation. Drawing on Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800),[4]

[3] Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955). German translation: Herbert Marcuse, *Triebstruktur und Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1957).

[4] F. W. J. Schelling, "System des transzendentalen Idealismus," in *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. K. F. A. Schelling, I/3 (Stuttgart/Augsburg: Cotta, 1856–61). English translation: F. W. J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism (1800)*, trans. Peter Heath (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978).

On the Relation of the Plastic Arts to Nature (1807),[5] and the first draft of the *Ages of the World* (1811),[6] he presented "living imitation" and "absolute abstraction" as parallel moments in nature's self-expression, which art reveals. He connected these to Adorno's concept of mimesis and the primacy of the object, showing how art both affirms nature's alterity and enacts a unity that emphasizes ecological responsibility. In a Schellingian manner, Höfele sketched an ecological attitude that holds social critique and natural wonder in dynamic tension.

3. Camilla Flodin: *Adorno's Aesthetics of Nature and Schelling's Naturphilosophie*

Flodin, who delivered her presentation online, argued that Adorno's aesthetic project is best understood as an "aesthetics of nature," where art mediates nature's irreducible "more." Flodin drew parallels between Schelling's view of art as revealing the joint productivity of unconscious nature and human intention, and Adorno's insistence on art's immediacy preserving nature's alterity. Furthermore, Flodin proposed that both thinkers attend to the momentary perfection of living forms, which art lifts beyond temporality into an appearance that endures. Central to the form's convergence is the idea of "reciprocal receptivity," a stance in which the subject remains open to the non-identical object, resulting in a particular kind of mimesis.

4. Tobias Heinze and Kyla Bruff: *Constellating Nature? Horkheimer's Interdisciplinary Materialism, Adorno's Objection, and the Natural Sciences* and *Schelling, Naturphilosophie, and the late turn to Materialism*

In their paper presentations and subsequent dialogue, Heinze and Bruff explored the question of a materialist *Naturphilosophie* that addresses scientific complexity and social justice. Heinze defended Horkheimer's interdisciplinary materialism, characterized by its oscillation between social theory and empirical research, as crucial for confronting climate injustice. He countered objections about empiricism, theoretical overload, and aestheticization by underscoring Adorno's concept of negative totality. Bruff traced Schelling's materialist evolution from early organicism through the *Freedom Essay's* account

[5] F. W. J. Schelling, "Über das Verhältnis der bildenden Künste zur Natur," in *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. K. F. A. Schelling, I/7 (Stuttgart/Augsburg: Cotta, 1856–61). English translation: F. W. J. Schelling, "On the Relationship of the Plastic Arts to Nature," trans. Jason M. Wirth, *Kabiri: The Official Journal of the North American Schelling Society* Vol. 3 (2021): 132–158.

[6] F. W. J. Schelling, *Die Weltalter: Fragmente. In den Urfassungen von 1811 und 1813*, ed. Manfred Schröter (Munich: Biederstein, 1946). English translation: F. W. J. Schelling, *The Ages of the World (1811)*, trans. Joseph P. Lawrence (Albany: SUNY Press, 2019).

of ground and existence, to his late positive philosophy, in which matter recognizes the contingencies of reason, thereby ensuring that reason will never be subjugated to a closed, totalizing system. Bruff argued that the latter philosophy "places Schelling in unexpected proximity to Adorno and the Frankfurt School." Furthermore, Heinze and Bruff suggested a variety of conceptual keys that might illuminate climate injustice.

5. Panel Discussion: *Schelling and the Frankfurt School: Challenges and Promises*

Moderated by Bruff and Heinze, the panel addressed three central challenges: the chronological distance between Schelling and Critical Theory, the conceptual tension of idealist *Naturphilosophie* versus dialectical materialism, and the divergent political stakes. Martin Saar urged caution regarding "metaphysical baggage" while acknowledging the inheritance of Schelling's philosophy by (post-)Habermasian Critical Theory. Höfele proposed a methodological synthesis between Schelling and Adorno for inventive ecological thought, while McGrath emphasized speculative philosophy as a never-ending inquiry that counters metaphysical closure and ideology-bound critique. Because, as McGrath enchantingly expressed, stopping our questioning through speculative philosophy would amount to the "suicide of reason." Finally, Flodin's online contribution emphasized the relationship between Schelling's and Adorno's aesthetic theories.

6. Reading Workshops: Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* and Schelling's *Freedom Essay*

On the second day, two reading sessions explored Adorno's metacritique of Kantian practical reason and Schelling's account of the "indivisible remainder," with a focus on the two thinkers' respective accounts of freedom. Debates focused on whether Adorno's critique of idealism is reconcilable with Schelling's "indivisible remainder," and if Critical Theory's historicism can accommodate Schelling's metaphysical account of moral agency. Though consensus remained elusive, discussions affirmed that Schelling's account of the "indivisible remainder" offers a provocative challenge to social-historical reductionism and enriches the Frankfurt School's conception of autonomy.

Conclusion

The workshop revealed rich affinities and productive tensions between Schelling's evolving philosophy and the Frankfurt School's critical legacy. Speakers and participants demonstrated that Schelling's speculative

philosophy and Adorno's negative dialectics can engage in a productive conversation, each informing the other's strengths and exposing the limits of each. Future research might develop new frameworks for ecophilosophy, explore the political implications in Schelling's late thought, and investigate analyses of power, including in an ontological key, in critical praxis. The dialogues in Frankfurt have paved the way for sustained inquiry at the intersection of speculative philosophy and urgent contemporary challenges, as well as for future collaborative projects that build on these dialogues.

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