

The “Juncture” of Being: A New Assessment of the Schellingian Distinction between Ground and Existence

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Schelling presents the existence of God’s internal duality between ground and existence as the only real starting point for the true explanation of the phenomena of evil and human freedom. We will explicate here the essential relation between the reality of evil and the constitution of a system of freedom. Since the metaphysical monism that Schelling attributes to Spinoza, and later also to Hegel, cannot explain the subsistence of evil, subsumed in a whole or reality equivalent to the good or perfection, neither can account for freedom considered as the capacity of individual human beings. The broad link connecting the duality of ground and existence, and human freedom, as well as the way in which this new duality negatively impacts the concept of rationality is finally elucidated.

Keywords: Schelling – being – ground – existence – duality – reason – freedom

Introduction

In this article, we will undertake an assessment of the distinction between ground and existence from a twofold perspective. On the one hand, we will focus on the systematic place the distinction holds in Schelling’s philosophy of nature and broader general metaphysics coming from the period of 1800 – 1804. On the other, we shall elucidate the role that the juncture of Being – as Heidegger described it – plays in the newly inaugurated metaphysics of human freedom from 1809 onwards. In this sense, our new assessment of the “juncture of Being” refers to this intersection between the systematic ontology

of German Classic Philosophy and the metaphysics of freedom pointing forward into the philosophy of the 19th and 20th centuries.¹

The distinction between ground and existence, introduced famously by Schelling in the *Freedom Essay* (1809), is the key to overcoming undifferentiated monism and is thus the central concept of his middle metaphysics. The existence of God's internal dualism (*interner Dualismus*) between ground (*Grund*) and existence (*Existenz*), upon which reality is based, is the starting point for the true explanation of the phenomena of evil and human freedom. (SW IV, 146, 163, 429).² The duality of *Grund* and *Existenz* makes it possible to explain the status of evil and, at the same time, to preserve the unity required by reason in the face of metaphysical dualism. It is hence an internal dualism, also called differentiated or aspectual – modal monism. This difference was outlined by Schelling both in his *Naturphilosophie* and in the Identity Philosophy period (1801 – 1804), to escape from the deterministic consequences to which the monistic – immanent doctrine of the Spinozist type led. From 1809 onwards our author extends this duality to all beings, namely God, man, and nature.³

For Schelling, it is important to open a space of real movement for man to actualize both good and evil. Only in this way is there true freedom (cf. Heidegger 1988, 167 – 168; Gaudio 2009, 233), and the imputation of our actions can fall on man's metaphysical and moral disposition. Schelling will formulate here the essential relation between the possibility of evil and an effective system of freedom. A system of freedom (cf. KrV B 843; SW X, 36) lies though in permanent tension with the notion of a rational system understood as a metaphysical development of the categories of identity and unity.⁴

¹ We follow hence the line opened by Gabriel (2011) with his book on Schelling and Hegel, *Transcendental Ontology*, and more recently by Gardner (2017); Rae (2019); Auweele (2019). We would like to thank two kind anonymous reviewers of *Filozofia* for the some of those references.

² See Alderwick (2021, 144 – 145). On the difference between metaphysical dualism and aspectual or modal dualism, which Schelling proposes in the sense of an "internal dualism," see Hermanni (1994, 85 – 113); Baumgartner (1990, 185 – 206).

³ See Vetö (2000, 318 – 319); Leyte (1998, 49 – 50). On the construction of this distinction based on the *Philosophy of Nature*, see Vetö (2002, 118 – 173), Weber (1998, 94 – 105, 120 – 124).

⁴ In this line of argument, we will defend a strong thesis of incompatibility between freedom and system, as advocated by Heidegger (1988, 14 – 38, 163 – 164); Snow (1996, 142 – 143); Carrasco Conde (2013); Kosch (2006); Bowie (1993, 13); Friedrich (2009, 28); Brata Das (2016, 11 – 12, 24); Velkley (2020, 160); Laughland (2007) and Lauer (2010), against more moderate theses of relative incompatibility in Zizek (1996), Borbujo (2004), White (1983, 93 – 97, 106 – 109); López – Domínguez (1999), Gabriel (2020); Vetö (2000, 320 – 330); Ottman (2010, XI); Fuhrman (1962, vol. 1, 231), and Underwood Vaught (2011). Oser (1997, 1 – 7), following Theunissen (1976 and 1994), defends an original thesis of the incompatibility of

In its most original sense, the faculty of “willing” is contrary to a notion of freedom oriented exclusively towards the good, for without real alternatives we cannot speak of a real choice (*Wahl*) (cf. Vetö 2000, 392). Good as well as evil, the open and not previously decided possibility for one of them, are fundamental for the existence of a real and substantial kind of freedom, which is instantiated, according to Schelling, in every human action (cf. Heidegger 1988, 167 – 168; Gaudio 2009, 233). It requires that the choice for good or evil always remains undecided (*Unentschieden*) and thus rests on man’s entire metaphysical-ontological and moral disposition.

There is, in this sense, an essential relationship between the constitution of an effective system of freedom and the establishment of the possibility of evil.⁵ Since all systems up to now, including idealism, have denied, relativized, or reduced evil to good, there has not been – and will not exist until evil is adequately thought of – a system of freedom as Schelling proposes.⁶

I. Freedom against Immanence

When Schelling conceptualizes freedom as the faculty for good and evil, the difficulty of reconciling freedom and immanence, which he has been highlighting since the beginning of his treatise on human freedom, resurfaces. Previously, the concept of immanence had partially eluded the problems concerning the irreducibility of identity to equality (cf. SW VII, 340 – 346), and the metaphysical determinism dependent on a realistic interpretation of the notion of pantheism (cf. SW VII, 347 – 352).

The problem of evil threatens now again the notion of immanence, since, according to Schelling, it affects every system in general. What is the relation between the notions of immanence and system? This point can be elucidated if we consider that the system of philosophy presupposes immanence, that is, the existence of all things on a single plane of reality. If the real is split, as in Schelling’s later philosophy, between a plane of immanence and a plane of

the themes of the middle philosophy between the years 1806 – 1811, namely the facticity of the individual, with the systematic position of Schelling’s early and late philosophies.

⁵ We ought to differentiate sharply between the *possibility* of evil, which lies inside the scope of Schelling’s systematic efforts, and the question of the reality of evil which remains inscrutable insofar as it depends on the actualization of the particular will of man (cf. SW IV, 233, 259; VI, 40 – 42).

⁶ In 1988, 170, Heidegger affirms more emphatically than Schelling the impossibility of any system to assume the positivity of evil within itself. See also Heidegger (1988, 279); Gaudio (2009, 234). More on this topic can be found in White (1983, 107 – 109); Heidegger (1988, 14 – 38, 163 – 164); Snow (1996, 142 – 143); Underwood Vaught (2011, 218).

transcendence, between the aprioristic or negative philosophy and the philosophy of the contingent and factual or positive element, then there can be no single system uniting both parts of philosophy. Two systems are therefore possible, between which there can only be, in any case, a relation of communication or succession.⁷

After this brief clarification, let us return to the subject at hand. To the extent, then, that we accept the existence of evil in an immanent system, it must also be admitted that it undermines the concept of a perfect being such as that which classical and modern metaphysics had placed as the ultimate ground of the system of philosophy. The problem of evil thus confronts thought with a constitutive dilemma: either to deny the concept of an original perfect being or to reject, says Schelling, “in some way the reality of evil, whereby at the same time the real concept of freedom disappears” (*der reale Begriff der Freiheit*) (SW VII, 352 – 353; cf. Alderwick 2021, 137 – 139; Brata Das 2016, 21 – 22; Vetö 2000, 392).

In the alternative that denies the existence of evil, Schelling places Spinoza, for the latter equates reality and perfection. According to Spinoza, all actions are in themselves positive insofar as they express the highest perfection according to their inner nature, imperfection being only the result of a comparison extrinsic to these actions. Evil thus disappears altogether, for the force manifested in evil would be relatively less perfect than that manifested in good only if we consider this matter from our moral point of view, which is, however, alien to the nature of the action itself. Considered “in itself,” every action would be equally perfect and adequate to the nature of the agent of the action, thus following from the very nature of God (cf. SW VII, 353 – 354). If we take this stand, we should affirm that all that exists are degrees of perfection and that evil is presented as such to an extrinsic comparison to the thing: “What we here qualify as evil is only the least degree of perfection, although it is presented as a defect for our comparison, but it is not so in nature. This is undoubtedly Spinoza’s true position.” (SW VII, 354).⁸

⁷ There are numerous studies concerning the difference between positive and negative philosophy in late Schelling. Among them, the most influential are Bhatti (2014, 552 – 566); Bowie (1993, 141 – 159); Dews (2023, 117 – 139); Fackenheim (1954, 568 – 580); Houlgate (1999, 99 – 128); McGrath (2021, 86 – 109); Reardon (1984, 543 – 557); Rush (2014, 216 – 237). See also more broadly Laughland (2007); Lauer (2010).

⁸ Cf. Spinoza 1677, E II, d. 6; Letters 19, 21, 23. In the letters to Blyenbergh, as well as in different passages of the *Ethics* (e.g., I, appendix; II, 35, 47 – 49 and sc.; IV pref., *passim*) Spinoza understands that, apart from the good and the bad, relative to each particular man or what he designates as “finite mode,” evil is to good what the non – being is to being, that is, a mere negation.

To idealism, conversely, Spinoza opposes a philosophy of two independent principles: nature and freedom, phenomenon and noumenon, understanding, and reason. In this way, however, the philosophy of idealism lacks unity and therefore does not form a real system. We can say that idealism leans towards the horn of dilemma which denies the monist-immanent conception of the system to incorporate a principle that can account for the possibility of evil.⁹

In 1809, however, Schelling does not abandon yet his long-frustrated claim to a system of freedom, i.e., a system that unifies the concepts of freedom and sufficient reason.¹⁰ As we have seen, reason must conceive and bring out the beings of the world in their unity. Now, if evil, in accordance with immanence and the doctrines connected with it – such as the divine concursus in the production of actions, or the emanation of reality from a supreme metaphysical principle¹¹ – is in any way to be placed in God or already to be found in Him, Schelling must explain how this is not the case, how this does not commit him to a dualism contrary to a unity in which two absolutely distinct and independent principles interact, and in which reason cannot be constituted as a unified system [*ein System der Selbstzerreißung und Verzweiflung der Vernunft*]. (Cf. SW VII, 354; Bernstein 2002, 122 – 123, 127; Lauth 1975, 51 – 93; Vicente Serrano 2008, 221 – 255).

Although Schelling argues that dualism cannot be the highest point of view in philosophy because it prevents its systematic construction, Schelling

⁹ This continuity between Kant's and Schelling's accounts of evil, system, and freedom is the subject of analysis by Gardner (2017) and by Auweele (2019). Although Auweele points to a high degree of compatibility between Kant and Schelling regarding the ground of evil and situates the difference in nuance with regards to the notion of the intelligible act – to summarize, understood either as a deed in Kant or as a decision in pre-temporal past in Schelling – we lean more towards Gardner insofar as Schelling radically rejects the identification of freedom and moral good in Kant's practical philosophy, and, by doing so, provides a *positive* ground for evil in the human will although not a fully *rational* ground thus dissociating the latter from the notion of freedom.

¹⁰ For a modification of this claim in the work of Schelling see SW I, 159; X, 36.

¹¹ We call them doctrines "akin" to immanence, despite their shades of transcendence, because Schelling thinks that they are all reducible to immanence. Cf. SW VII, 354 – 355. In this passage, Schelling differs not only from the emanation and hypostasis scheme of Neoplatonism but particularly from his own doctrine, partially discussed in *Bruno and Philosophy and Religion*, of the fall of man and the world (cf. SW IV, 217 – 224, 233, 259 – 260, 263; VI, 38 – 40, 42 – 45, 51 – 52, 63). On the first point, see Beierwaltes (2000, 420 – 424, 434 – 440; and 1972, 100 – 144). Regarding the latter, see Cardona (2001, 513, n. 34, 521); Irlenborn (2000, 164 – 165). For the link between the Platonic theory of ideas and the fall of the world and man into the real, cf. Vetö (2002, 212 – 239, 417 – 460; idem. 2000, 367 – 368).

strives to articulate an admissible kind of duality that accounts for the existence of evil. For this reason, he introduces the notions of “ground” and “existence” (*Grund, Existenz*). These constitute, in the sense of Bernstein alluded to above, primary and essential distinctions in being.

Heidegger also guides us in understanding these concepts. Being is the most general category, which gives rise to duality but cannot be made manifest and evident as such. Duality is expressed in two indissoluble but distinguishable metaphysical elements or components. On the one hand, the concept of ground refers to that instance devoid of reason, to the basis or substratum of every being and, broadly, of all reality. On the other hand, existence is predicated on beings in a certain aspect, namely as objective presence, that which reveals itself – in Heidegger’s terms, that which stands “before the eyes” (Cf. SW VII, 357; Heidegger 1988, 186 – 188; Vetö 2000, 312 – 314).¹²

The difference between ground and existence can be understood by means of the analogy, introduced in the Philosophy of nature, between gravity and light (cf. SW IV, 146, 163, 429; see also Vetö 2000, 318 – 319; Leyte 1998, 49 – 50; Vetö 2002, 118 – 173). Or, in the ideal realm, through the difference between the pure will *without* understanding, characteristic of the ground, and the complete will, brought to light *by* understanding (Cf. SW VII, 359 – 362; Bernstein 2002, 123 – 125). According to Schelling, understanding, that is, light, existence, is born out of the deprivation of understanding. Without assuming an original darkness from which everything comes, there would be no reality for created beings. All emergence is, in this sense, a passage from darkness to light. This is the deeper sense of the phrase according to which “God alone – He, the existent – dwells in pure light, because He alone is by Himself” (SW VII, 360; cf. *Kunst* § 35, SW V, 400).

Let us dwell briefly on a point of interest to this article referred to Schelling’s characterization of the real and ideal ground as darkness and light respectively. To comprehend further this topic, we need to refer to Schelling’s real-idealist position¹³ and to the doctrine of powers according to which the latter stages of development presuppose and incorporate the previous ones.

¹² More on the current discussion about the concept of ‘existence’ can be found in Gabriel (2014, 109 – 129).

¹³ See Theunissen (1965, 174 – 189). The work of W. Schulz (1975) on Schelling’s *Spätphilosophie* as the ending and completion of idealism has been seen as the counterpart of the thesis of H. Fuhrmans (1940) regarding late philosophy as a departure from idealism and, consequently, a turn towards a theoretical position at odds with the latter. We agree fully with Fuhrmans and suggest rather a falling away of Schelling’s thought into more of a realist ontology as Laughland (2007) states.

The ideal, the light ranks higher than the dark ground in the sense, precisely, that it entails a potentiation of the ground, but, inversely, it is only because the real already exists *in essendi* that the ideal can come to exist. The doctrine of the powers utilized by Schelling from the formulation of his Philosophy of nature to the Munich and Erlangen periods is also non-reductive, and the lower powers are not sublated into the higher ones but are *qualitatively* distinguished from them – and this constitutes, in fact, a key development in the theory between 1801 and 1810, namely that the difference that was originally merely internal and quantitative has become now, in 1810, full-fledged external and qualitative.

We might also project the theory of the juncture of Being between ground and existence, real and ideal, darkness and light into the late romantic assessment of the will and of individuality. It is in this direction that Schellingian cosmogony around the years 1809 – 1811 comprehends elements anticipating Nietzsche's formulation of the Dionysian and the Apollonian in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872).¹⁴ Also in Schelling, the anomic or chaotic is the basis, substratum, or origin of the ordered world that we perceive in space and time. However, within the world and in the heart of man, the anomic element is never completely mastered and continuously struggles to reveal itself and dominate. (Cf. SW VII, 359 – 360; Bernstein 2002, 126; see also SW VII 467 – 471).

II. The Dark Ground

The inner duality of ground and existence is from this point onwards a double principle of all beings: God, man, and nature (cf. SW VII, 362 – 365). The main function of the distinction between ground and existence is to establish an ontological difference between God and the world that makes possible the independence of the finite, the real movement or development of nature, and, finally, the emergence of human freedom itself.¹⁵ This dualism thus constitutes the starting point of Schelling's middle metaphysics between the years 1806 – 1820.

However, Schelling speaks not only of duality but also of its "internal" character (*interner Dualismus*). In this sense, we must ask ourselves: what does "internal" mean here if we say that Schelling rejects, in his middle metaphysics, any ontological and spatial interpretation of immanence? And, in turn, what is the relationship between the internal moment, leading to Schellingian

¹⁴ See KSA I, 9 – 42, 64 – 75. More specifically in KSA I, 26 – 29.

¹⁵ For earlier references on the relation between Schelling's modal dualism and the establishment of freedom of the finite in *Bruno* and *Philosophy and Religion*, see SW IV, 233, 259; VI, 40 – 42.

pantheism, and the dualist element that allows the elucidation of human freedom? We can answer these questions through an exegesis of the following complex and key fragment of the *Freedom Essay*:

Since there is nothing before God or outside of him [*außer*], it is necessary that he has in himself the ground of his existence.... This ground of his existence, which God has in himself, is not God considered absolutely, that is, in so far as he exists, since he (this ground) is only the ground of his existence. He (this ground) is nature in God [*die Natur in Gott*]; an essence inseparable [*unabtrennliches*] from him, but different [*unterschiedenes*]. (SW VII, 357).¹⁶

We should bear in mind, in the first place, that the distinction between ground and existence first appeared in the work *Presentation of My System of Philosophy* of 1801 (cf. *Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie*, § 54, 93, 137; SW IV, 146 – 147, 162 – 164, 200 – 201; SW VII, 357) and was conceived by Schelling to counteract the monist-immanent implications of the 1801 – 1804 Spinozist system of identity, especially the denial of evil and, with it, of human freedom (cf. Vetö 2002, 146; Cardona 2011, 513; Underwood Vaught 2011, 192).¹⁷ For Schelling, the duality of ground and existence is explained as the counterpart of God, insofar as he is regarded as an absolute being and essence. This pre-predicative and pre-symbolic being is not a form of unity, but the original identity or non-ground (*Ungrund*) from which the categories of relative unity and duality emerge in reciprocal interdependence (cf. SW IV, 235 – 236; Scheerlinck 2017, 114; Vater 1984, 34 – 35).

Indifference is not, for Schelling, the result of oppositions but an essence of its own that cancels all contrasts; it is the non-being of these, the mere and simple lack of predicates (cf. SW VII, 406; Jaspers 1955, 302 – 303). How does the unity of the non-ground refer to the juncture of Being between ground and existence that constitutes the object of this investigation? The link between unity and duality could be better grasped through the introduction of what our author calls “the Third.”

Schelling refers in other works to the absolute or “unprethinkable” (*unvordenkliches*) primal being as a third term = x required for the establishment

¹⁶ Cf. WA I, 43 – 46. On the difference between metaphysical dualism and the aspectual or modal dualism that Schelling proposes, in terms of an *interner Dualismus*, cf. Hermanni (1994, 85 – 113); Baumgartner (1990, 185 – 206). On the characterization of the “being-other” of the absolute or God as a possibility of freedom, see SW IV, 229, 233, 257 – 258; VI, 31 – 34, 44; VII, 53 – 60; Vetö (2000, 422).

¹⁷ The distinction between what is ground of existence and existence itself comes ultimately from Giordano Bruno in *Concerning the Cause, Principle, and One* (1584).

of the synthetic identity of $A = B$.¹⁸ This identity, which allows us to think of the distinction between ground and existence, is strictly speaking a threefold equivalence: $(A = x) = (B = x)$, where the 'x' or third term represents that which cannot appear as such in the identity but is required to explain the emergence of something outside the mere equality or repetition $A = A$.¹⁹ If we assign 'A' to the ground, 'B' to existence, and to 'x' the primordial essence, we see unfold the articulation, in the *Freedom Essay*, between duality-unity, on the one hand, and the absolute, on the other. Consequently, the ground, ontologically considered, takes precedence over existence, as duality does over unity. On the other hand, the duality itself is dependent, in turn, on the primordial essence, in the sense described before.

The previous explanation leads us to the elucidation of the terms "outside" (*Extra*) and "beyond" (*Praeter*), used by Schelling to allude to the ground in its connection with God as absolute existence. These are not to be interpreted in accordance with Spinoza's substantial and spatial-deterministic metaphysics, which the author of the treatise has been criticizing (SW VII, 429).²⁰ Schelling's aim when introducing the concepts of derivative absoluteness and self-subsistent dependence earlier in the 1809 work, as well as those of ground and existence from this point onwards, is to preserve for freedom, as for all of nature, a root independent of God that makes possible, precisely, its self-sufficiency (*Selbständigkeit*) (cf. Theunissen 1965, 181 – 182). From 1809 onwards Schelling develops a concept of human freedom that is both immanent and transcendent regarding the plane of existence. Let us now mobilize this concept to further clarify both the concept of ground and the relation between ground and existence. Human freedom, like every being that lies in the realm of the finite, including nature, is immanent, insofar as it lies in the be-

¹⁸ An exhaustive list of references on the concept of 'the third' (*das Dritte*) in Schelling's middle metaphysics includes the following passages: SW IV, 290 – 292; VI, 46 – 47; VII, 60, 62, 205, 448; VIII, 213 – 215; WA I, 28, 128 – 129.

¹⁹ On the subjacent logic regarding the concept of 'the third,' see Carrasco Conde (2013, 254 – 255); Frank (2018, 248); Frank (2014, 130, 133, 138 – 139, 141); Gabriel (2020, 140 – 143); Žizek (2007, 76 – 80, 103); Tritten (2012, 77 – 79); Oser (1997, 168 – 170). It has been especially Manfred Frank, listed above, who clarified the relation between the third element needed for the establishment of a synthetic identity and the medieval logic of the *reduplicatio*. We will explore this topic in a different paper.

²⁰ Besides Underwood Vaught, the following authors have analyzed the scope of Spinoza's influence on Schelling's early and middle philosophy: Melamed (2020, 93 – 96, 103 – 107); Scheerlick (2017, 101 – 110); Brata Das (2016, 170); Müller-Lüneschloß (2012, 162 – 166); Schulze (1957b, 579, 581 – 583).

coming of the ground, which has a root independent of God. But human freedom is also transcendent since it operates “outside” (*Extra*) or “beyond” (*Praeter*) the ground of nature and is free with regards to it. (SW VII, 458 – 459) God, for his part, is also transcendent to the finite – as Schelling expresses later in the work of 1809 – because he does not stand in a relation of equivalence to nature, like the Spinozian *Deus sive natura*, but in a relation of radical – or *toto genere* – ontological difference with it (cf. Cardona 2001, 516).

Finally, we must dwell on the Schellingian equation between nature in God and the concept of ground. Schelling adopts a double meaning also for the term “nature.” On the one hand, he alludes to nature in God as ground, basis, the obscure, or anomic. On the other hand, and according to his earlier philosophy (1795 – 1804), nature constitutes the set of objects which, as phenomena, are opposed to the spirit or the subject.²¹ At this point, it is worth mentioning, as Leyte and Rühle have pointed out, a shift from the harmonious concept of nature of early Jena Romanticism to a darker, more chaotic, and irrational one that anticipates middle and late Romanticism (cf. Leyte – Rühle 2000, 54; Rodríguez 2022; Müller – Lünenschloß 2012, 56 – 57; Oser 1997, 8 – 10).

This double aspect of being, in so far as it exists and in so far as it is the basis of existence, constitutes the starting point of a non-deterministic immanent doctrine that Schelling characterises by the notion of becoming (*Werden*). Schelling advocates a complete elimination of the concept of immanence understood in ontological and spatial terms. He also declares that it is necessary to replace Spinozist immanence with his own concept of becoming, according to which things become and develop within the ground of divine existence, which is not, however, identical with God as an existing being (cf. SW VII, 358 – 359; Heidegger 1988, 150 – 155, 195 – 196, 202 – 203, 215 – 216; Carrasco Conde 2013, 101; Vetö 2002, 146). We see how our author struggles to sustain an immanent approach, since all transcendence seems to imply an inadmissible dualism that tears apart the unity required by reason (cf. Underwood Vaught 2011, 157 – 160; Brata Das 2016, 165). On the other hand, and by recognizing in immanence the problem of being-in as a modality tending towards ontological non – differentiation, he must admit a kind of distinction in his system that puts pressure on immanence (cf. Underwood Vaught 2011, 157 – 158).

²¹ This double meaning of the concept of nature has been explored by Heidegger and Duque, among other authors. See Heidegger (1988, 195); Carrasco Conde (2013, 60 – 63); Duque (2007, 69 – 70); Müller-Lünenschloß (2012, 185); Nassar (2014, 208); Underwood Vaught (2011, 228 – 229); Vetö (2000, 262 – 266).

If the ground is in God, but is not God, then the becoming of the process unleashed by the ground in God produces a result other than God considered as absolute identity (cf. Schulze 1957b, 580). Because of this, the circle of self-revelation “does not come to a closure,”²² and an inexplicable hiatus opens between, as it were, the God who is and the God who becomes, or to express it with Heidegger, between God and man (cf. Heidegger 1988, 190 – 191, 195 – 196; Bowie 1993, 92; Leyte – Rühle 2000, 54 – 59; Carrasco Conde 2013, 253).²³

In an earlier discussion of pantheism and the problem of acosmism, Schelling addressed the difficulty that modern philosophy encounters in thinking of the link between both the finite and the infinite. Schelling’s approach in the *Freedom Essay* seeks to think of both poles without reducing them unilaterally to unity. On one side, it shows the ultimate impossibility of introducing qualitative differences in a radically monistic, immanent philosophy. On the other side, however, it shows that any doctrine of finite reason must adhere to a point of view that recognizes the independence and self-subsistence of the finite as such (cf. SW X, 41 – 46; Bernstein 2002, 120; Vetö 2000, 475; Vater 2017, 386 – 387; Oser 1997, 150).²⁴

We propose that, insofar as Schelling elaborates a duality (*Dualität*) not incompatible with the unity of the system, his 1809 doctrine could be characterized as “transcendent – immanent” (cf. Gaudio 2009, 239 – 242; Safranski 2002, 60; Underwood Vaught 2011, 179 – 180). Transcendence is implicit in the necessity he ascribes to duality for the self-revelation of God or, in other words, the effective existence of the world. If there were neither transcendence nor duality, God would have no reason to go outside himself, for there would be no other being towards which to express himself and, so to speak, “through which” to reveal himself (cf. SW VII, 362 – 365; VII, 54 – 58).

How can we elucidate this assertion according to which transcendence is required to posit the effective existence of the world, and, in this regard, of all reality? We have mentioned above that the process of self-differentiation of

²² On the key concept of caesura and closure of the system of freedom, see Brata Das (2016, 30, 35 – 37); Carrasco Conde (2013, 253, 257, 270); Irlenborn (2000, 172 – 174); Leyte (1998, 32); Underwood Vaught (2011, 188, 203 – 207); Velkley (2020, 154 – 159); Cardona (2001, 512 – 516). To better understand the notion of “absolute difference” related to the incompleteness of logical identity, cf. Frank (2018, 255 – 259).

²³ On the topic of the impossibility to assimilate the logical and real movement and becoming – to the extent that this entails a critique of idealism, see SW X, 124 – 125; Bhatti (2014, 571, n. 56, 575 – 576).

²⁴ See a previous development of this line of thought, namely the idea of thinking strict finitude as such, in SW IV, 249, 259, 263, 285; VI, 39 – 42.

the Absolute that, up to 1801 – 1802, had been only internal and quantitative is now gradually conceived by Schelling as a dislodgment of the original unity into an external difference. This detachment was interpreted in 1802 – 1804 as a falling away into the real according to a neo-platonic scheme (cf. SW IV, 233, 259; VI, 40 – 42), and in the period of 1809 – 1810 as a condescending of God that lets the world be independent of the principle following the cabalistic teaching of the *Zimzum* (SW VII, 428-429).²⁵

A few lines earlier, our author had expressed himself on his own duality by affirming that it was the “only right dualism” because it admitted at the same time a unity. An apparent dualism, such as that of the systems which subordinate the evil principle to the good, does not constitute a true duality of principles, but a monism of the good, as we have seen, incapable of explaining the origin of evil in relation to the supreme principle of all things (cf. SW VII, 359). But in another sense, we have seen that if there were no prior unity of God alongside duality, nothing could be conceived of as identical, nor could a return to unity really be strived for, nor, in the end, would duality itself come to be. So it is that Schelling famously asserts:

In the circle from which everything comes into being, it is no contradiction that that by which the One [*das Eine*] is created is itself created by it. In this there is nothing first and nothing last because everything presupposes itself reciprocally; nothing is the other and nothing is without the other (SW VII, 358).²⁶

It is relevant at this point in the development of the argument to return briefly to the dichotomy between ground and existence from the point of view of will and understanding mentioned above. This transition occurs when Schelling leaves behind his more general metaphysics to elaborate his cosmogony and his practical philosophy, that is, with the irruption of man and the figure of the spirit. The will is, we can say, the core concept in the work of 1809, and for this reason, it is the subject of extensive analysis in what follows (cf. SW VII, 359 – 360). Schelling affirms, in this sense, that all the phenomena of nature,

²⁵ Further reading on the topic of a contraction of God and Jewish thinking of the *Zimzum* can be found in Müller-Lüneschloss (2012, 162); Schulze (1957, *idem*. 1957b, 579 – 580). Oser (1997, 233) explains very clearly how the voluntary aspect of creation and thus Schelling’s grounding of the world in God’s personhood is an innovative theory of the period between 1809 and 1810 that disappears in the first two drafts of the *Ages of the World* (1811, 1813) in favour – once again – of a rather impersonal and purely onto-metaphysical process. A similar claim has been made by Žižek (2007). For the sources of Schelling on the topic of the (con)descent of God into the world – the real – see Gründer (1958); Oser (1997, 41); Schulze (1957b, 586).

²⁶ See also on this topic Heidegger (1988, 197 – 199, 245 – 249); Bowie (1993, 99, 109 – 111); Leyte (1998, 29); Vetö (2000, 405).

from sensation to intelligence, are transfigured into will, and that the act of willing (*Wollen*) is itself the original being (*Urseyn*) (cf. SW VII, 350; III, 533; Leyte 1998, 34).²⁷ We see here how Schelling replaces the essence of nature conceived as substance, according to the Spinozist system, by his own theory of nature as becoming, and of its ground as the primary will which then spreads through all created nature extending from God to man (cf. Alderwick 2021, 149 – 150; Barth 2011, 173; Gabriel 2020, 146 – 147). The key role played by the will in relation to the understanding, both considered as transfigurations of the principles of darkness and light,²⁸ is certainly responsible for the pessimistic and critical assertion of rationalism – though no less realistic – later in the text:

By the eternal fact of self-revelation everything is rule, order, and form [*Regel, Ordnung und Form*]; but in the ground there is always the irregular [*Regellose*], as if on some occasion it might burst forth again, and nowhere does it appear that order and form were the original [*Ursprüngliche*], but as if an initial confusion had been brought into order (SW VII, 359 – 360).

This fragment entails, as we have said, vast consequences for the concept of rationality, insofar as the concepts of rule, order, and form appear as subordinate, that is, as a subsidiary moment, with respect to that which is devoid of rules, which Schelling regards as the original force of reality. Here Schelling takes up the tradition of the Platonic demiurge in the *Timaeus* or of Leibniz's heterodox Christian interpretation of God. According to both doctrines, the creator would be able to give form to matter, but not to create it from nothing.

However, Schelling's pessimism is not total, and not even the predominant element of this last fragment, for he recognizes that there is, in fact, a more powerful force in the world than the irregular or the confusing, namely the self-revelation of God. Thanks to God's self-revelation, existence indeed overcame the dark and irrational component, that is, the eternal inertia, that emanates from the ground and seeks to reveal itself and dominate. This last point also illustrates the fact that revelation is not for Schelling a metaphysical but a moral necessity, and that, as such, it must be supported by a continuous

²⁷ This analysis reveals how much Schopenhauer is more indebted with Schelling than he would like to admit. See Schopenhauer (1819, § 21, § 26).

²⁸ We have spoken above, in reverse, of the transformation of the real principles of darkness and light into the ideals of will and understanding. On these relations, see Heidegger (1988, 199 – 200).

striving of God and man against their inherent tendencies to self-reclusion (cf. SW VII, 439 – 440; WA I, 19, 36, 90, 98, *passim*).

III. Concluding Remarks

We will now summarize the topics covered in our article and briefly describe the reasons for a new assessment of the juncture of Being regarding the traditional account of duality in Schelling. Following a recent path opened by Gabriel, Gardner, and Auweele, our approach incorporated the role that the juncture of Being plays in Schelling's newly inaugurated metaphysics of human freedom and that projects itself into the philosophy of will, finitude, and facticity of the 19th and 20th centuries.

We presented the problem of evil in 1809 as a third critique of the concept of immanence, which surpasses the previous ones, directed against the concept of undifferentiated equality and all realist ontology (cf. SW VII, 340 – 352), which our author attributed to Spinoza. This problem placed thought before the dilemma of explaining evil by introducing a kind of duality and undermining the concept of a system based on the notions of identity and unity, or, to hold on to the latter, to deny the independent ontological status of the former, and, with it, that of human freedom.

The doctrine of an internal dualism is related to the redefinition of immanence in terms of the concept of becoming. This allowed us to account for the real movement of things in the ground, without altering the metaphysical-ontological attributes of God. We call this twofold way of considering God and things Schelling's "transcendent-immanent" teaching. If we conceive the metaphysical distinction of ground and existence from the point of view of the concepts of will (*Wille*) and understanding (*Verstand*), we situated the notion of will as a predecessor of analogous doctrines in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. In a different investigation, we will explore the articulation between the metaphysical duality of ground and existence and the *reality* of evil.

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