



NEGATIVITY AND UNITY – AN ONTOLOGICAL PREOCCUPATION IN SCHELLING' WELTALTER, III

Negatividade e Unidade – uma preocupação ontológica nas Eras do Mundo, III, de Schelling

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Abstract: It is the purpose of this essay to identify an Ontological turn from Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom into the third draft of the Ages of the World. Our initial analysis will focus on Heidegger's take on the Treatise, arguing that indeed the onto-theological critique advanced by Heidegger is not only a defensible, but necessary conclusion of the strategy undertaken by Schelling in that text. However, in the Weltalter III, Schelling changes his strategy of description of the World, and organizes the creation in three different potencies of contraction, expansion and unity that follow and eventually overlap each other. It is my main hypothesis that these reconsiderations of the phenomena of time and freedom allow for the identification of an ontological turn in Schelling, one that is marked by the constant reference to negativity and despair as grounding, and affirmation and love as grounded. These forces of grounding and grounded forces which are later on unified in an ontological unity of potencies, which allow us to see ontology as the fundamental aspect of this period of Schelling's philosophy.

Keywords: Worldliness, Eschatology, Ontology, Negativity.

Resumo: O propósito deste ensaio é identificar uma virada ontológica na passagem do Tratado sobre a Essência da Liberdade Humana de Schelling, para o Eras do Mundo (Weltalter, III). Nossa análise irá inicialmente focar na interpretação Heideggeriana do Tratado, argumentando que a crítica onto-teológica colocada por Heidegger não é apenas uma conclusão defensável, mas necessária da estratégia escolhida por Schelling no Tratado. No entanto, no Weltalter III Schelling muda sua estratégia de descrição do Mundo, e organiza o fenômeno da criação em três diferentes potências de contração, expansão e unidade, que seguem e eventualmente sobrepõem umas às outras. Nossa hipótese é que tais reconsiderações do fenômeno da temporalidade e da liberdade permitem a identificação de uma virada ontológica em Schelling, uma virada marcada pela constante referência à negatividade e desespero enquanto fundantes, e afirmação e amor enquanto fundados. Essas forças ativas e passivas de fundação do mundo são mais tarde unificadas em uma unidade ontológica de potências, que parece colocar a ontologia enquanto aspecto fundamental da filosofia do autor nesse texto.

Palavras-chave: Mundaneidade, Escatologia, Ontologia, Negatividade.

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I – Introduction and Method

It is the purpose of this essay to identify an Ontological turn from Schelling's *Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom* into the third draft of the *Ages of the World*.

In order to do so, our initial analysis will focus on Heidegger's take on the *Treatise*, arguing that indeed the onto-theological critique advanced by Heidegger is not only a defensible, but necessary conclusion of the strategy undertaken by Schelling in that text. This strategy consists in the resort to a jointure of Being in order to deal with the tension between essence and existence, by appealing to such jointure Schelling creates a theological abyss that he is not able to surpass in the *Treatise*.

However, in the *Weltalter III*, Schelling changes his strategy of description of the World, and organizes the creation in three different potencies of contraction, expansion and unity that follow and eventually overlap each other. Moreover, these potencies modalize a different perception of time, one that allows for a double-immanence of Creation and Revelation. These reconsiderations of the phenomena of time and freedom allow for the identification of an ontological *turn* in Schelling, one that is marked by the constant reference to negativity and despair as grounding, and affirmation and love as grounded. These forces of grounding and grounded forces which are later on unified in an ontological unity of potencies.

It is not one's intention to suggest that Heidegger had access to the third draft of the *Weltalter*, nor to draw a necessary reading of the *Weltalter* of a work on ontology. It is one's take, however, that the ontological reading is *defensible*. The difficulty presented by the *Weltalter* is peculiar, for it is a third draft of a work that Schelling never finished, of the three moments of constitution of the World. Of the two translated drafts, however, only the third version present us with a strong version of substantive becoming and ontological unity that allows for the reading here undertaken – the second draft is, though a fascinating piece of philosophical gnosticism, a very dense, almost impenetrable, text. Most importantly, the second version does not give us the structure of tri-partite division of forces and a double immanence of time, for this reason, our focus here is in the tension between the *Treatise* and the third draft of the *Weltalter*.

This article is dedicated to the memory of our friend and professor, Ricardo Aronne.

II – Heidegger's concern: the hidden Onto-Theo-logy in the Treatise

Good and Evil, Heidegger seems to suggest throughout his reflections on Schelling's *Treatise*, are two *Grundweisen*, two fundamental guises or manners through which *Sein* experiments its own *Da*, the

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opening and retreat of a primordial ground – in this sense, love and hate are given primordial rankings alongside each other in the constitution of an ever-grounding God.

But how is this God constituted? How is it that the first cause comes into being? Heidegger will deal in some of the densest passages of his work on Schelling with this problem, his main concern are [a] the factual nature of the *ground* which God constitutes, [b] the tension between creature and creator in a system that claims to account for a *becoming* rather than substantive God and [c] the possibility of an inner sense of evil and love *in* God. How is it possible for Schelling to separate Ground from Existence? And what are the implications of such separation? First of all, it is impossible to understand this ontological separation without resorting to the question of Being. Being, read by Heidegger is *not* meant in its essential context, but in its facticity, “self-contained being as a whole”¹ in which we are able to identify a ground that sustains this being. However, Being and ground are related, and inter-dependent. Beings are actually existent and ground-giving, at the same time, without a grounding we cannot posit this actually existent being as *existing*. The *emergence* of something as a revelation (beings are *offenbar*) presupposes the openness of the ground. There is a system of identification of the being which is revealed and its existence as such, between the spirituality of the *what*-ness and the facticity of *that*-ness. Schelling echoes the Doctrine of Relatedness, as advanced by Aquinas when he writes that “Everything that is is only insofar as it expresses absolute identity in a definite form of Being”².

We already know, from reading Schelling, that the primal nature of all beings is *will*. Such comprehension of being is especially difficult, since God is *the* primordial Being, and as a Being it must will for something. But if God longs for something, then it is clear that there is something lacking in God – so God is not an *absolute naturing nature*, it is rather a *natured nature* for insofar it *becomes* it has something that emerges within itself. But if God is being natured, Heidegger questions, what is that natures God? The somewhat cryptic answer is: God causes itself to be natured by itself. There is a nature *in* God that is capable of nurturing himself in his process of ever-becoming-God. Heidegger writes: “The ground in God is that in God which God himself “is” not truly himself, but is rather his ground *for* his selfhood. Schelling calls this ground “nature” in God.”³. God is, thus, understood dialectically, in a movement of inner affirmation and negation, of inner struggle for becoming itself.

So there is affirmation and negation pertaining God as the “Being of beings” and in this sense God is free insofar it is in a process of becoming, thus it must be free to will that mode-of-being-itself rather than other. There are forces at play in God, beings that strive to be preferred to the other. The classical notion of God as a *causa sui* is hence transformed into a God which is historical rather than substantive.

1 HEIDEGGER, Martin. *Schelling's Treatise on the Nature of Human Freedom*, [henceforth ST] p.107

2 Schelling apud Heidegger, p. 108. Comparing to Aquinas statement of Relatedness in *De Veritate*, I, 2: *Veritas intellectus est adaequatio intellectus et rei, secundum quod intellectus dicit esse quod est, vel non esse quod non est.*

3 ST:110

And yet, Schelling tells us that God is also prior to the ground. God must be the cause of its own becoming in a system of identities – nature then achieves a level of metaphysical complexity quite hard to be grasped. Nature *belongs* to beings as their foundation, as opposed to that which these beings are. It is essential to them, but it is not *existential*. As Heidegger points, this is quite a remarkable way to *elucidate* nature.

It is tempting to compare God to the Baron of Münchhausen, who pulls himself out of the swamp by pulling himself by his own hair outward of the mud. But the “insurmountable difficulties” of such illogical proposition is that God's becoming is not temporal in any linear assumption of the term, it must be understood poetically, in the sense of a *primordial time* which is united when Ground and existence are identifiable, when they are *related*.

We have an adequate perception of time insofar we conceive things *in relation* to the *essence of temporality*: we see that the flowing of time shows us the appearance of something *as it is*, and we are able to explain the whole of what we see, as a matter without residuum – we are able to build an artifact, and by the time we finish building it, we see that there are no pieces left that we did not know where to place. Conversely, in an *inadequate* perception of time, in a *vulgar* understanding, we see things, and we conceive them as something, but we are not able to see the whole of an object in relation to our mind and in relation to Being - we have an artifact, but there are either pieces that seem to be missing or *too many* pieces. There is a residuum that we are not able to situate. So things are already existing somehow in God in the *essential* aspect, as we posit these things as *existing* it is a matter of correctly inferring how they are identical with the Being that is in God. That's why “to consider things in their being means precisely to question them in relation to God”.

The discussion gets even more interesting when we learn that God is *not* the immanent cause of all things, because there is no *rigid* notion of substance in Schelling's metaphysics. So how is God the cause of all there is? We must remember that even though there is an essence of temporality, this is a dynamic essence that we are dealing with, so if god is in a process of ever-becoming, so are all the things that relate to him. So things reflect a godlike mode-of-becoming, as emerging, as being-revealed in the open, which is the ground – which is also God. At this point, we must face the question of anthropomorphism. If things must reflect the becoming of God in order to be *adequate* or *authentic*, an authentic human-being is that which reproduces a form-of-being which is god-like in its authenticity. So now we have a tension between creature and creator which is taken to its deepest implications. Schelling gives the name of “The Jointure of Being” to this “deepest implication”. Heidegger writes:

[t]he self revelation of God concerns the nature and Being of God as the existing one. This nature of God's can only be shown by way of the nature of Being in general by returning to the jointure of being and the essential lawfulness according to which in that jointure of Being, a being is structured as a being. God is truly himself as the Existent, that is, as He who emerges from himself and reveals himself. In that He is Spirit, for the

Spirit in Spirit is the will, and the will in will is understanding. But understanding is the faculty of rule, of law, of ruling, binding unity in the sense of the unification of what is different belonging together. This articulating unity shines through what is confused and obscure. Understanding is the faculty of clearing. The pure will of the pure understanding is what primordially will itself, Spirit. God as Spirit is as the existing one who, as Spirit, emerges from itself⁴.

It would take us a great while to exhaust all subtleties of this paragraph, but as we try to clarify what this “jointure of being” is, it is important to focus once again in the relation of relatedness at play in this “jointure”. Also, it is important to focus on the concepts used by Heidegger to describe the metaphysical movement in Schelling. First, there is a lawfulness (order) that characterizes a “being” which is “structured as a being”. Second, God is *adequate* when he is Existent, and Existence is understood as an emergence which is *causa sui*. God does not cause himself as a substance, but rather as a process. This is a proper formal, efficient and sufficient cause, but it is not immanent. Which brings the point of the spirituality of God. In God the will is Spiritual, hence it is essential. And only as essential it emerges from itself. While Understanding, nevertheless, it seems that God retains the *existential* feature of being-grounded. So Understanding is a non-spiritual, facultative sense of unification, of bringing the spiritual and material realms into each other. But how is that God has these existential features? Which is the being that has the individual striving to will this understanding, so that God may reveal itself to God through the eyes of an alter – which is nevertheless willed by God? This being is Man. Man is the other of God that posits something that allows the essence of God to emerge. This “something” which is posited, according to Schelling is the inner sense of Evil that therefore acquires a *positive* realm, as an affirmation rather than a privation. This is the point where evil is thought where in the system of identity with a positive and essential quality, for Schelling evil is first thought as essential, as the affirmation that denies Being and tries to incorporate the ground of creation. It is against this affirmation that the process of negativity ignites in the higher (spiritual) realm. Thus, in order for the tension of ground-existence that characterizes God to be possible, Schelling needs this tension between Real, Authentic, faculties of good and evil that are essentially willed by man. We see once again a tension of being-grounded and grounding which is co-dependent. For a Ground to be Opened as “God”, there must be a tension. And Human nature, in this sense, is naturing “Evil” as the affirmation that is needed and somehow willed by a ground that needs to become. It wills its own necessity. But this becoming is not *external* to God, it is what is willed by God as Ground. Schelling describes this fittingly.

To be separate from God they would have to carry on this becoming on a basis different from him. But since there can be nothing outside God, this contradiction can be only solved by things having their basis in that within God which is not *God himself*, that is, in that which is the basis of his existence⁵.

4 ST: 119

5 SCHELLING, 1992:33

In this sense, we can see how the “jointure” operates as a dialectic tool to create a tension between Creature and Creator, while maintaining the Ontological necessity of the Creator. In God there is a *longing for the Creature*, this urge characterizes the Groundness of God. To take a liberty with Heideggerian terms, the Ground needs something which is grounded upon it, and it longs for this. This process of longing causes the emergence of a will for something which is then made into Language: the first modification of God's longing is *gramma*. Subject, Man, is language incarnate and as this incarnation of language man has the ability to express the values and the experiences of the “Da” which constitutes their “seyn”, so the ground is now unfolded in language, and language expresses value-like propositions that affirm something onto the ground. Language constitutes world, constitutes the openness of the world-as-such. Love and Evil are the inner-most qualities of the experience of this Da, and they are already essentially willed in the Ground, in God. They are nevertheless made-flesh by Men.

Now we can move to the conclusive part of our assessment of Heidegger's interpretation of Schelling, where the question of the onto-Theo-logy becomes more apparent.

Heidegger, in his work on Nietzsche, writes:

Because hate traverses [*durchzieht*] our Being more originally, it has a cohesive power; like love, hate brings an original closure [*eine ursprüngliche Geschlossenheit*] and perdurance to our essential Being (...) But the persistent closure that comes to Dasein through hate does not close it off and bind it. Rather, it grants vision and premeditation. The angry man loses to power of reflection. He who hates intensifies reflection and rumination to the point of “hardboiled” malice. Hate is never blind; it is perspicacious. Only anger is blind. Love is never blind: it is perspicacious. Only infatuation [*Verliebtheit*] is blind, fickle, and susceptible – an affect, not a passion [*ein Affekt, keine Leidenschaft*]. To passion belongs a reaching out and opening up of oneself [*das weit Ausgreifende, sich Öffnende*]. Such reaching out occurs even in hate, since the hated one is pursued everywhere relentlessly. But such reaching out [*Ausgriff*] in passion does not simply lift us up and away beyond ourselves. It gathers our essential Being to its proper ground [*auf seinem eigentlichen Grund*] it exposes our ground for the first time in so gathering, so that the passion is that through which and in which we take hold of ourselves and achieve lucid mastery of the being around us and within us⁶.

Now, this inner-necessity of Hate and Love that are expressed as essential characteristics of the behavior and experience of Men, is clearly a retained influence from the lectures on Schelling. The reason why one can claim such influence is that first love and hate bring an *original closure* that is *related* to the *essential* Being, so we see that these values have spiritual-like properties (as we've just described to be the case in Schelling). Moreover, the reaching out of these values exposes a certain necessity in order for an experience to be possible “It gathers our essential Being to its proper ground”, so we can “achieve lucid mastery of the being around us and within us”. Such Schellinean statement remind us that the values have a inner-quality, which is essential, and an existential quality – which is related to singular beings. In

⁶ HEIDEGGER, 1991:47-48[58-59]

existential beings, *real* love and *real* hate is the experience which corresponds to the essential form of these behaviors, or, to put in other words, it is the behavior of love and hate as willed in Spirit. Insofar singular beings are regarded, there is a real choice between real good and real evil. And this is the most important point for the dialectical movement. An interesting point in Schelling's proposition is that he does not claim that Men are *good* by nature, in nature men are neither good nor bad, but they are *necessarily inclined to prefer something*. The faculty of willing the good or the evil is the necessary element, the essential element, of Men. It is the element that moves values into the ground. However, evil and love are only real insofar they are essential, insofar they relate to the spiritual realm. In the existential realm, they are posited as an experience, as a linguistic expression of a spiritual thing, and they are only revealed as such by their reference to the spiritual order. It remains that there is a matter of inclination, which is pervasive of the element of choice: we understand that Evil and Love are not only possible, but essentially real. But why is it that the decision is real? Because if Evil and Love are necessary in themselves, one could quickly point that we are determined to choose, and not free to decide. The *act* of decision is that which is necessary, but from that it does not follow that which is willed is not free. Human freedom, Heidegger insists several times, *must be* a faculty. So it is *necessary* that human freedom *is* and also that it [is] a *faculty*. This expresses the reality and the necessity of freedom, but it does not say *what is the decision*. But how could someone want the Evil? Someone wants the evil, because, as it has been mentioned earlier, the inclination for evil is inserted in men by God. And Evil, as something, *strives* to become, to appear, to be spoken. For only when it is spoken, it is real. The inclination to evil, in itself, is not yet evil incarnate. It is already *somehow* effective, even as a force that strives with love to emerge. As an inclination, it wants to become. But the fundamental experience, Heidegger claims, is that experience of decisiveness, of *deciding*, this is the experience that opens the World for Men, as we can decide and be responsible for our decision, on the real good and the real evil. But in placing the necessity of freedom *in* God it might be the case that Schelling was missing the fundamental point of a being that posits the possibility of articulating God as such. Heidegger's main contention here seems to be that in the Freedom Essay, Schelling strategy to deal with the necessity of an Other that would bring about the posited existence of the Ground was to speak of a sort of transcendence that would cease the longing for the creature in God. Such jointure, however, seems to indicate an ontological problem in Schelling, that is, the tension between Ground and Grounded is only solved by appealing to a Theological argument rather than an ontological turn in the substantialization of the Ground.

Even if Schelling did not think through the “anthropomorphical” reservation in this fundamental way and did not see the realm of tasks behind it, one thing still becomes quite clear. The fact of human freedom has for him its own factuality. Man is not an object of observation placed before us which we then drape with little everyday feeling. Rather, man is experienced in the insight into the abysses and heights of Being, in regard

to the terrible element of the godhead, the life-dread of all creatures, the sadness of all created creators, the malice of evil and the will of love.⁷

If we follow Heidegger's critique so far, it is difficult not to agree with his consideration of Schelling as a representative of the Onto-Theo-Logos that marks the abandonment of the proper ontological Ground in which to posit the predicates of existence. However, it seems that the *Weltalter*, especially in its third draft, represents indeed an attempt of a Fundamental Ontology that seems to *think through* the so-called anthropomorphical reservation in every moment of the rotary drives that will constitute the Ground.

III – An ontological preoccupation in *Weltalter*, III

The third draft of the *Weltalter* presents us with a throughout description of a “past” in which we find the constitution of a Ground. This Ground is understood in relation to Freedom and an Other that are explained by potencies of Contraction, Expansion and Unity. It is by this movement of potencies that Schelling explains the becoming of God into Act, of the coming-into-being of a God which must be object of itself to *be-come*⁸. These rotary motions are in fact allowing for God to come *into* act, to exist as something present. Such act of transcendence must be understood as an urge towards existence, where God is unveiled as a living concept in a living time⁹.

Time is indeed of special relevance for the constitution of the World, because it is understood as a kind of double-immanence, as a primordial time which is related to a time of revelation. The primordial time is a kind of Eternity that contains time subjugated within itself¹⁰, such Eternity is presented as a pure Godhead which does not exactly become, but is rather re-presented as a potency of contraction. This potency of contraction, however, *decides* its own existence in a potency of expansion, this potency of expansion represents a kind of revelation where the veiled silence of the contraction is unveiled as language¹¹. The novelty point, however, is the insertion of a third potency of Unification, which creates a substantive form of Being out of the two first potencies. This third potency of Unity is the emergence of the Ground *as Ground*, it posits the first potency as re-emergent as an internalized negating force: the Godhead is thus understood as a fundamental Ontological reference point to time and freedom as it necessitates the second potency as grounded.

7 ST: 164

8 SCHELLING, Friedrich. *The Ages of the World III* [henceforth AW3], p. 7

9 AW3: 20

10 AW3: 44

11 AW3: 91

We are hence confronted with a system of potencies that cause and overlap each other in time in a rotary motion that surpasses dialectical atrophy¹². But in order to clarify the subtleties at play in this movement, we must take each potency separately.

III.a – Contraction

The first motion in Schelling's system of Freedom is that which *negates revelation*, this force of permanent contraction must be understood as an eternal “No”. But how is this “No” expressed, if it is expressed at all?

First of all, it must be understood that in Contraction time is only a primordial time, it is the time before the possibility of revelation. Schelling explains that in terms of a state of no-conation¹³, of pure freedom – a kind of will that wills nothing, that wills its own negation¹⁴, and in doing so reproduces a most absolute silence which is also a kind of absolute freedom¹⁵. The first potency wishes to preserve itself as ground and to further veil itself in silence, but it is precisely because of its force of self-negation that an emergence into the outside of non-Being comes forth¹⁶. Within the first potency lies the motion into the emergence of an expansion, something that from the inside of a primal negation seeks to affirm itself and to start a time of revelation.

In Contraction, all the time is a pregnant time, is a time of Creation and absolute silence, where the predicates are not yet posited. But this time of Creation *urges* for Being to come, it urges its own existence¹⁷. Such purely divine nothingness is not expressed timely, but it *constitutes* the possibility of time, in its ever-grounding potency the force of Contraction *grounds* the revelation as will-to-nothing, something that exceeds all time in a kind of ek-stasis.¹⁸ But in Schelling the static is paradoxically potential, rather than an actual, motionless, non-Being. Because even the non-Being is in movement towards its own negation, towards its own internality. In forcing its own internality, the force of contraction nevertheless decides on an outside of itself, on an externality, an exposition of its own necessity. This is why necessity comes before Freedom, but it is *because* of Freedom that we are able to posit something *as necessary*. This is why

God, in accordance with the necessity of its nature, is an eternal No, the highest Being-in-itself, an eternal withdrawal of its being into itself, a withdrawal within which no creature would be capable of living. But the same God, with equal necessity of its

12 AW3: 92

13 AW3:25

14 AW3:29

15 AW3:24

16 AW3: 32

17 AW3:18-20

18 AW3: 16

nature, although not in accord with the same principle, but in accord with a principle that is completely different from the first principle, is the eternal Yes, an eternal outstretching, giving and communicating of its being¹⁹.

In this passage Schelling makes the somewhat cryptic claim that without this first Contraction no creature would be capable of living. This is a rather important point in order to identify an ontological *turn* in the third draft of the *Ages of The World*. It is the negation that makes live possible, it is the eternal no that constitutes the very possibility of life. A possible conclusion of this description is that there is no Outside of Negation. The highest form of negativity posits the possibility of Bios, of forms-of-living. Negating the element of withdrawal, the alienation from the spiritual, constitutes a negation of the foundation of live itself – forgetting Negation, in this sense, is forgetting Being, is leaving the possibility of adequate understanding of our origins behind us. And it is only by understanding negation that we can move towards affirmation, still inside this fundamental ontology. Experience, in this sense, will always be an experience of a kind of negativity, a kind of primordial withdrawal which is re-presented by a communicative (linguistic) expansion of Being.

III.b – Expansion

So Being is in-expansion as an Eternal “Yes”: the expansion posits a first kind of Being which is Free in its decision to be-come. This Being is ever opposed to the non-Being, to the negativity, of the contraction. This decision towards Existence must follow from the negation of necessity, it must be a decision on revelation – and this decision on revelation constitutes the Negation as both a ground and as an abyss.

The abyss of the contraction is the idea of an absolute Freedom²⁰, a Freedom that chooses to withdraw itself from Decision by negating its own emergence, this abyss is ever present as a force against which Expansion struggles. But it is only as Expansion struggles against this Contraction that the later achieves its status as an existent ground. In pure Contraction, or in the pure Godhead, such struggle is *urging* to become, but it is not yet at play. When the decision to become arises from the nature of the Godhead (that wills *more* than its own nothingness) we have such eternal struggle between an Eternal Yes and an Eternal No²¹.

This is the point of differentiation in God that allows for the ontological *turn* that one is trying to identify in the third draft of the *Weltalter*. However, if Schelling had remained thinking this problem in terms of two opposed forces of relation, it would be hard to scape an Eternal Return to a Theological

19 AW3:11

20 AW3:31

21 AW3:38-39

reference. But there is a *beyond* this relation of Being and Not-being, a point of connection of this struggle into an ontological structure of unity²².

So far, we've had the explicitation of an internal negation which is *externalized* in a expansion, in a decision to become Being rather than the withdrawal into Non-Being. This is the point where the predicates of existence are made possible, but they are not yet *posited* into a world of language and revelation. At this point we have the progression into Creation, a primordial time that struggles within itself. If contraction gives us the pure-necessity, expansion has given us the possibility of an *outside* of necessity by externalizing an *other* of the internal necessity of the Godhead, by affirming Being. We have an opposition of essence and existence, where the essential precedes the existential, but the existential makes the essential *meaningful*²³. In the Unity of these potencies we have a World.

– Unity

Our description so far has been one of the life of the Godhead, where in negation and affirmation the essential Godhead comes *into* Being. However, the force of the Non-Being keeps striving to affirm its own negation, it keeps willing its nothingness, and pulling Being back. Out of this revolving movement, Being and Non-Being emerge as the totality of a Creation which is *revealed*, this revelation posits the linguistic possibility of a World where beings are revealed in the mode of a Unveiling of potencies.

In this Unity, Schelling gives us a philosophy of History, the possibility of *narration* of the process of creation which is going to be pursued linguistically, in a Godhead which is revealed into language. But the revelation is not an abandonment of God's own being into language, the ground remains the ground as it is unveiled, it remains necessary as a negation. Negativity is the primordial matter of the process of unveiling, it is *through* the purity of negation that communication comes into the World. Negativity provides the oxygen to the fire of revelation²⁴.

The time of revelation, however, is only possible if this Negativity is had in relation to its expansion, to its progression into Being. It is by this progression into Being that Negativity can re-emerge anew as experience of the World²⁵. This experience of a *moment*, of something unique which is unveiled in the World is only possible in the unity of the negative and positive potencies.

Indeed, nature reserved for itself to renew constantly each moment in the present time. And it does so through the simplest measures, for nature in the woman draws the spirit of the man to herself and the man, in turn, draws the world spirit to himself. And hence, here that guiding connection and concatenation of members, each independent from the other, is produced, whereby the last becomes capable of able for being active in the first

22 AW3:27

23 AW3: 32-33

24 AW3:41

25 AW3:45

and the highest becomes capable of being active in the lowest. For no being can begin the course of its existence without immediate divine reinforcement. Each new life commences a new time existing for it that is immediately knotted to eternity. Hence, an eternity immediately precedes each life. And in temporal generation, just as in the first generation, everything external is only a part or a member of a concatenation that goes up to the highest²⁶.

This is the sense of the ontological unity of the third potency: the opposed forces of internalization and externalization are collapsed into a Being that overcomes the difference between internal and external in the necessitation of both these forces for revelation. These forces, are active in the Unity as a World where all representation is related to an eternal struggle²⁷. In this we have a double-immanence of time, where in different moments different forces will prevail, with the necessity of Nothingness as the ghost of all representation – a Being that is always a Being-towards-Nothing²⁸, towards its own negation.

Before moving to the conclusive remarks, it is necessary to go back to a point in the freedom essay which is recasted in this draft of the *Weltalter*, that is, the question of *adequate* and *inadequate* perception of time. In the freedom essay this double-immanence was not sufficiently explored by Schelling, which probably gave rise to some of the final criticisms by Heidegger. Is it the case that the emergence of this point of Unity in the *Weltalter* suggests a different possibility of interpretation to the phenomena of time?

There is an absolute essence which encompasses the very possibility of time which is Eternity, there is also a Phenomenical time, that is the metaphysical reflection, or counter-part, of eternity in a world of revelation²⁹. The Eternal or Naturing Time, is not what we would recognize as *duration* it is the whole that is perceived in duration and in this sense it is ek-static. In the ek-static order we have an absolute essence which is later immanent in the Unity, as existences and appearances. In the pure-Godhead we are not yet confronted with a time that posit existent predicates, but our predicates of existence are referent to this eternity and the struggle within it³⁰.

Now, this is the novel element in the reading of time in Schelling as opposed to the monistic reading. It is true that Spinoza already speaks that all we have is had in *relation* to a kind of Eternity. But Eternity is not in movement for Spinoza, and it is in *constant* struggle for Schelling. There is indeed a sense of externality *within Eternity itself*, such is the force of expansion. In the time of revelation our representations of the World are in reference to this ever-grounding struggle of contraction and expansion. But the decision on Life, on Existence, is ever haunted by its negation which *grounds* Existence. This negation is Death, and is experienced by a deep sense of despair. Life in revelation is marked by this

26 AW3:67

27 AW3: 45

28 AW3:49

29 AW3:63-66

30 AW3:83

struggle of despair and love, for the human race in the radical decision between the reality of despair and the reality of love.

But love is an expansion, it is an affirmation *against* the grounding despair of Non-being, and all experience of love is hence an experience of *pathos*: it is by *fear* that wisdom is possible³¹.

IV – Experience and the Pathological

But what would Schelling's account of the World have to say about our own modern reality? About our current mode of being in the World?

There is something to be said here about the contemporary denial and repression of the pathological. For Schelling, this repression is a repression of experience *itself*: we miss the point of rupture between Non-Being and Being, and replace it with a notion that suffering needs to be *avoided* rather than confronted. In doing so, we create an ascetic reality of systemic repression of the Real. This repression is still a choice, it is precisely the choice for Non-Being, a choice of denying one's own Freedom – one's own authenticity³². With Sartre, we could say that contemporary asceticism is in bad faith, it denies its own nec-cessity.

The imaginary World of asceticism, however, would be the best of possible Worlds, a World where our love would not need to be haunted by a spiritual despair: an open new world of possibilities of progress, where no one would really die.

But Schelling was able to perceive that this same world where no one ever really dies is the same place that makes life impossible, for it is only in the shadow of the negative that we are able to posit ourselves: the best of all possible worlds is a world where no life persists.

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31 Proverbs 1:7; AW3:107

32 AW3:101-104

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