

verifiche
rivista semestrale
di scienze umane

Verifiche. Associazione di Studi filosofici
Sede: via Francesco Algarotti 13/a – 35125 Padova
Direttore responsabile: Antonella Benanzato
Amministrazione: info@verificheonline.net
Autorizzazione Tribunale di Padova n. 2445 del 17/09/2017
Poste Italiane s.p.a. - Spedizione in Abb. Postale 70% - NE/PD
Digitalandcopy sas - Vignate (MI), Via Roma 25
Anno LII - N. 2 Luglio-Dicembre 2023
www.verificheonline.net

PREZZO € 35,00

VERIFICHE 2023

2

verifiche

«VERIFICHE» ISSN 0391-4186

*Reason in Check.
Philosophy of Religion in
Classical German Philosophy*

Edited by Giulia Bernard
and Barbara Santini

G. Bernard, L. Fonnesu, M. Glatzel, K. Hong,
T. Mauri, B. Santini, S. Schick, M. Tangorra,
P. Valenza, D. Vanden Auweele, Y. Xia

2023

ANNO LII N. 2

Verifiche

Rivista fondata da Franco Chiereghin e Giuliano Rigoni

Direzione/Editors

Luca Illetterati (Scientific Coordinator), Paolo Giuspoli (Editorial Coordinator), Francesca Menegoni.

Redazione/Editorial Staff

Michela Bordignon, Francesco Campana (Final Editing), Valentina Chizzola, Luca Corti (Peer review Editor), Alberto Gaiani, Paolo Livieri, Giovanna Luciano, Armando Manchisi, Giovanna Miolli (Web Manager), Elena Nardelli (Final Editing), Antonio Nunziante, Federico Orsini, Giovanni Realdi, Barbara Santini (Reviews and Discussions Editor), Sergio Soresi, Alberto Vanzo.

Consiglio scientifico/Advisory Board

Gabriel Amengual, Myriam Bienenstock, Rossella Bonito Oliva, Claudio Cesa (†), Franco Chiereghin, Ferruccio De Natale, Giannino Di Tommaso, Alfredo Ferrarin, Luca Fonnesu, Stephen Houlgate, Marco Ivaldo, Jean-François Kervégan, Claudio La Rocca, Eugenio Mazzarella, Adriaan Th. Peperzak, Michael Quante, Leonardo Samonà, Birgit Sandkaulen.

The Journal uses a double-blind peer review procedure. Authors of articles to be considered for publication should email one copy in .doc or .rtf format, and another copy in .pdf format, to Luca Corti (redazione@verificheonline.net). Please include a short abstract in English (about 1,500 characters) and 4-8 keywords. The Journal accepts contributions in English, German, Italian, French, Spanish and Portuguese. Accepted contributions should be prepared according to the journal's guidelines. Book reviews are generally commissioned by the Editorial Staff. If you are interested in writing a book review, please contact Barbara Santini (recensioni@verificheonline.net). Books should be sent to the following address: «Verifiche», c/o Luca Illetterati, Dipartimento di Filosofia, Sociologia, Pedagogia e Psicologia Applicata, Università degli Studi di Padova, Piazza Capitanato 3 - 35139 Padova, Italy.

«Verifiche» is an international biannual, peer-reviewed Journal (ISSN: 0391-4186)

info@verificheonline.net
www.verificheonline.net

Verifiche

International biannual, peer-reviewed Journal (ISSN: 0391-4186)

ABBONAMENTO/SUBSCRIPTION PRICE

Italia: privati € 55,00 (sostenitori € 65,00; studenti € 35,00); enti: € 80,00.

Europe and Mediterranean Countries: € 75,00 (students: € 55,00); institutional: € 100,00.

Other Countries: € 90,00 (students: € 70,00); institutional: € 115,00.

Spese postali incluse/Shipping charges included.

FASCICOLI SINGOLI/SINGLE ISSUES

Italia privati: € 35,00 (fascicolo doppio: € 65,00); enti: € 45 (fascicolo doppio: € 85,00)

Europe and Mediterranean Countries: plus € 11 shipping charges (double i.: plus € 17).

Other Countries: plus € 16 shipping charges (double i.: plus € 22).

FASCICOLI ARRETRATI/BACK ISSUES

Italia: € 40,00; Europe and Mediterranean Countries: € 40,00 (plus € 11 shipping charges).

Other Countries € 40,00 (plus € 16 shipping charges).

MODALITÀ DI PAGAMENTO/METHOD OF PAYMENT

Con bonifico bancario intestato a/By bank transfer to:

«Verifiche. Associazione di studi filosofici»

Intesa Sanpaolo Spa - Filiale terzo settore Veneto centro, via Jappelli 13 - Padova

IBAN: IT54X0306909606100000142839

Nella causale specificare il numero o l'annata (per ordini) oppure solo l'abbonamento (in caso di abbonamento annuale). Please indicate *issue number* and *year* (for single issue) or *year* only (for yearly subscription).

Per usufruire dello sconto per studenti è necessario indicare nella causale il numero di matricola e la sigla della sede universitaria (oppure l'indicazione dell'istituto).

For further details:

info@verificheonline.net
www.verificheonline.net

Cover Design by Giulia Battocchia

verifiche

Anno LII, N. 2, 2023

Dir. resp. Antonella Benanzato • Amministrazione: Via F. Algarotti 13/a - 35125 Padova
Autorizzazione del Tribunale di Padova n. 2445 del 17.09.2017
Digital And Copy S.a.s. - Vignate (MI) - Via Roma 25 - A. LII (2), 2023

Reason in Check. Philosophy of Religion in Classical German Philosophy

v *Introduction*

Giulia Bernard and Barbara Santini

Essays

1 *Job's Loneliness. Theodicy and its Failure in Kant's Thought*

Luca Fonnesu

21 *St. John 1.1 or Luke 23.46? Fichte and Jacobi on the Truth of Christianity*

Stefan Schick

51 *Die Bedeutung des religiösen Bewusstseins in den Psychologievorlesungen Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermachers*

Matthis Glatzel

75 *Il destino del cristianesimo nella filosofia della religione di Hegel*

Pierluigi Valenza

103 *The Borders of an Uncertain Object. Nature, Desire and Magic in Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*

Manuel Tangorra

- 133 *Die anthropologische Konzeption in Hegels Religionsphilosophie und ihre Problematik*
Kaiyuan Hong
- 157 *From Religious Philosophy to Philosophy of Religion. A Path in Schelling's Late Philosophy*
Tommaso Mauri
- 179 *Revealing Reason's Limits and Rebuking Heidegger: Schelling's Late Thoughts on God and Religion*
Dennis Vanden Auweele and Yu Xia
- 207 *Mitteilung of the Absolute: Performing Knowledge in the Philosophy of Religion*
Giulia Bernard
- 239 *Religionsphilosophie: kein Abschied von der Letztbegründung. Hölderlin und die Gottesfrage im Ausgang von Kant*
Barbara Santini

Book Reviews

- 253 A. Tomaszewska, *Kant's Rational Religion and the Radical Enlightenment. From Spinoza to Contemporary Debates*
(Paola Rumore)
- 259 B. Norris, *Schelling and Spinoza. Realism, Idealism, and the Absolute*
(Giovanni Temporin)

- 265 P. Dews, *Schelling's Late Philosophy in Confrontation with Hegel*
(Michael Hackl)
- 271 M. Feldmeier, *Freiheit und Rationalität. Zur Rolle F.H. Jacobis im Denken Søren Kierkegaards*
(Roman Winter-Tietel)

REVEALING REASON'S LIMITS AND REBUKING HEIDEGGER: SCHELLING'S LATE THOUGHTS ON GOD AND RELIGION

by Dennis Vanden Auweele* and Yu Xia*

Abstract. *Heidegger's critique of the history of modern philosophy as an ontotheology remains influential. Although a latecomer to modern philosophy, Heidegger reads Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling's philosophy as ontotheological, even if Heidegger considers Schelling to make attempts to move beyond this tradition. In this paper, we revisit and reassess Heidegger's critique of Schelling with a focus on the latter's later work. Heidegger names three problematic aspects in Schelling's philosophy, namely a lack of a radical distinction between ground and existence, a notion of God as a subject, and an overemphasis on the systematicity of thought. We argue that Heidegger fails to recognize Schelling's important innovations in rethinking the ground, the divine subject and the nature of systematic thought. As such, Schelling makes important strides beyond the problematic aspects of modern philosophical thought. The point of this contribution is to tease important insights from Schelling, rather than rehash or re-interpret Heidegger's critique of Schelling.*

Keywords. *Schelling; Heidegger; God; Religion; Reason*

Though Martin Heidegger famously claimed that philosophical research is atheist, his criticism of the philosophical tradition spanning from Aristotle to German Idealism has had a remarkable impact on (philosophical) theology. Heidegger's criticism of the philosophical tradition made many philosophers today think that this tradition did a rather poor job of thinking God and religion. Heidegger argued that the tradition missed the constitutive and ontological difference between Being (*Sein*) and entities (*Seienden*) by using the tools of understanding 'entities' to try to understand 'Being'. They applied a so-called *Technē-kratic*

* Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

logic of domination to a realm principally before, after and/or beyond all technology. This turns the logic of Western philosophy into an onto-theo-logic, a way of thinking and speaking that understands the highest (*Theos*) by means of entities (*ta onta*). As a result, the ontotheological way of thinking ensnared God and religion entirely in the nets of rationality. Disregarding some tentative and haphazard exceptions, Heidegger believes he was the first to release Being from its servitude to the ontotheological.

The longest-living member of the philosophical movement called German Idealism, the *Wunderkind* F.W.J. Schelling¹, was given particular attention by Heidegger. Heidegger's reading of Schelling resonated with many of his own concerns, even though he would become highly critical of Schelling and the philosophical movement of German Idealism². German idealistic philosophy is thought to begin with Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) and culminate with G.W.F. Hegel's finalization of his system in the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1817). Schelling was instrumental at the beginning, middle and end of German Idealism, and even essential after it had come to its end. Heidegger lectured extensively on the evolving philosophy of Schelling in at least three decades (in 1927/28, 1936 and

¹ We use, when available, *Schelling's Sämtliche Werke* for references to Schelling. When available, we also use a published translation – if none is available, we provide our own translation. For Heidegger, we use the *Gesamtausgabe* with, when available, a translation.

² Walter Schulz comments that the *Daß* or thatness in Schelling resembles being as nothing in Heidegger (W. Schulz, *Die Vollendung des Deutschen Idealismus in der Spätphilosophie Schellings*, Pfullingen, Neske, 1955); Christian Iber joins Schelling's and Heidegger's similar yet distinct attitudes toward reason, holding that if Schelling's philosophy is to show the otherness of reason, then Heidegger's philosophy is more radical, i.e., anti-reason (*Anti-Vernunft*) (C. Iber, *Das Andere der Vernunft als ihr Prinzip*, Berlin and New York, Verlag de Gruyter, 1994); Emilio Corriero argues for a strong affinity between Schelling's notion of primal being, the unprethinkable 'X', and Heidegger's concept of being, although he downplays the fact that, in Schelling, the primal being is inseparable from God (E. Corriero, *The Absolute and the Event*, New York, Bloomsbury, 2020).

1941/42), usually starting with noting Schelling's keen insights and instincts, but ultimately including Schelling in the same sweeping condemnation: like all western philosophy, Schelling cannot escape the clutches of the ontotheological way of thinking³.

Heidegger's reading of Schelling's philosophy remains influential today. In a nutshell, Heidegger argues that Schelling's philosophy (including his early, middle and late philosophy) remains subjectivist by understanding God as a person and subject, thereby entrapping Being in a system of subordination. He, then, remains within the subjective turn in philosophy most candidly espoused by Immanuel Kant and Johann Gottlieb Fichte. In Schelling studies, scholars have quibbled endlessly whether Schelling's late philosophy, what he himself calls a «science that begins from the beginning [*eine von vorn beginnende Wissenschaft*]]⁴, is a move within or beyond transcendental philosophy. Traditionally, Horst Fuhrmans and Xavier Tilliette argued that Schelling's philosophy is a reactionary return to a more traditional metaphysics after Kant's destruction of that way of thinking⁵. Others, more charitably, argue that Schelling remains broadly within transcendental philosophy, though he manages to include elements in such a philosophy that Kant rejected as *Schwärmerei*. Lothar Knatz called this «not stepping back from but going beyond Kant»⁶.

³For in-depth discussion of how Heidegger finds Schelling to be an ontotheological thinker.: C. Yates, *The Poetic Imagination in Heidegger and Schelling*, London and New York, Bloomsbury, 2013; P. Höfele, *Wollen und Lassen*, Freiburg und München, Verlag Karl Alber, 2019; I. Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

⁴F.W.J. Schelling, *System der Weltalter*, ed. by S. Peetz, Frankfurt a. M., Vittorio Klostermann, 1998, p. 78.

⁵H. Fuhrmans, *Schellings Philosophie der Weltalter*, Düsseldorf, Verlag L. Schwann, 1954, pp. 302-323; X. Tilliette, *Schelling. Une philosophie en devenir*, Paris, Vrin, 1970.

⁶L. Knatz, *Geschichte, Kunst, Mythos. Schellings Philosophie und die Perspektive einer philosophischen Mythostheorie*, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 1999, p. 14 (our translation). See also: W. Kasper, *Das Absolute in der Geschichte*, Mainz, Matthias-Grünewald Verlag, 1965; G. Medley, *History is Divine Art: Schelling's Spätphilosophie as Orthodox Romantic Theology*, «Journal for the History of Modern Theology», XXII, 2015, pp. 59-76.

Others, again, argue that Schelling's late philosophy takes up the insights of Kantian philosophy from a different starting point. They argue that the late Schelling, much like his contemporary Arthur Schopenhauer, starts philosophy *outside of reason*⁷. We note this discussion as the guiding thread of Schelling's reception in traditional Schelling studies. This is not to dismiss different approaches to Schelling's philosophy⁸.

With the increasing availability of Schelling's work today, particularly his work after 1809, causing a revival of interest in Schelling's philosophy⁹, it is high time to reassess Heidegger's

⁷ T. Tritten, *Against Kant: Toward an Inverted Transcendentalism or a Philosophy of the Doctrinal*, in *Nature, Speculation and the Return to Schelling*, ed. by T. Tritten and D. Whistler, New York, Routledge, 2017, pp. 143-155; A. Hutter, *Geschichtliche Vernunft. Die Weiterführung des Kantischen Vernunftkritik in der Spätphilosophie Schellings*, Frankfurt a. M., Suhrkamp, 1996; D. Vanden Auweele, *Exceeding Reason: Freedom and Religion in Schelling and Nietzsche*, Berlin and New York, Verlag de Gruyter, 2020, ch. 7.

⁸ Markus Gabriel, for one, argues that Schelling's dialectical thought navigates in between a «one-sided (and despite itself scientific) contemporary Anglo-American transcendental epistemology and the return of ontology in recent French philosophy (Badiou, Meillassoux)» (M. Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology. Essays in German Idealism*, London, Continuum, 2011, p. ix; see also: Id., *Der Mensch im Mythos*, Berlin, Verlag de Gruyter, 2006). Others point out the anthropological starting point of Schelling's philosophy, thereby moving away from idealism per se. For instance: M. Theunissen, *Schellings anthropologischer Ansatz*, «Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie», XLVII, 1956, pp. 174-189.

⁹ After Schelling had aroused the interest of Existentialist philosophers (such as Kierkegaard, Tillich and Marcel), his philosophy resurfaced in the 1950-60s through the work of Horst Fuhrmans and later Walter Schulz. Since the 1990s, Schelling is increasingly attracting attention from non-German scholars. Some works include: E.A. Beach, *The Potencies of God(s). Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology*, New York, State University of New York Press, 1994; J.-F. Courtine, J.-F. Marquet (eds.), *Le dernier Schelling: Raison et positivité*, Paris, Vrin, 2015; S.B. Das, *The Political Theology of Schelling*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2016; R. Dörendahl, *Abgrund der Freiheit. Schellings Freiheitsphilosophie als Kritik des neuzeitlichen Autonomie-Projektes*, Würzburg, Ergon Verlag, 2011; L. Ostaric (ed.), *Interpreting Schelling*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014; A. Roux, *Schelling et l'avenir de la raison. Rationalisme et empirisme dans sa dernière philosophie*, Paris, Editions du Félin, 2016; D. Snow, *Schelling and the End of Idealism*, New York, State University of New York Press, 1996; D. Vanden Auweele, *Exceed-*

evaluation specifically of Schelling's philosophy of religion. In this paper, we will look particularly at Schelling's philosophical theology and philosophy of religion in order to assess whether Schelling indeed lacks the finesse of a kind of thinking that is responsive to the revelation of Being. We cannot attend to all the nuances of Heidegger's wavering appreciation of Schelling, but note that Heidegger's critique of Schelling usually comprises three points, namely that Schelling remains largely within the tradition of ontotheology because (1) Schelling has no radical distinction between ground and that which exists; (2) because Schelling sees the ultimate ground still as a subject (subjectivism); and (3) because Schelling insists on a systematic way of doing philosophy. While these criticisms ring true in themselves, they fail to do justice to Schelling's innovations in thinking, respectively, about the eternal past, God as a subject and the nature of systematic thought. This essay is structured in five parts. After outlining Heidegger's critique of Schelling's philosophy (sections 1 and 2), we turn respectively to Schelling's retorts to Heidegger with regard to the eternal past (section 3), the divine person (section 4) and the organic system (section 5).

1. *On Schelling's Philosophy as Ontotheology*

Heidegger calls the philosophical or metaphysical tradition in Western philosophy the *onto-theo-logic* or an 'Ontotheology'. Or as Heidegger puts it most succinctly, «philosophy is metaphysics»¹⁰, which means that a metaphysical disposition dominates Western philosophy from ancient Greek (excluding some of the pre-Socratics) up to and including Modern thought. Ontotheological

ing Reason: Freedom and Religion in Schelling and Nietzsche, S. Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder. On Schelling and Related Matters*, London and New York, Verso, 1996.

¹⁰ M. Heidegger, *Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens*, in *Gesamtausgabe: Zur Sache des Denkens*, ed. by F.-W. von Hermann, Frankfurt a. M., 2007, XIV, p. 69; Eng. trans. by D. Krell, *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking*, London and New York, Routledge, 1977, pp. 312.

metaphysics is an ontological style of thinking that conflates two questions: «The ontological question of the essence of beings as such»¹¹ and «the theological question of the ground of beings as a whole»¹². By equating these questions, ground (*Grund*) and essence (*Wesen*) lose their constitutive difference, making the concept (*Begriff*) both the essence and ground of entities (*Seyenden*). A logic of concepts then applies to both immanence and transcendence, a flattening ontological logic that fails to do justice to Being (*Seyn*) by reducing it to a particular being or entity (*Seyende*). Heidegger uses different terms to describe Being, sometimes as a no-thing, a groundless ground or even abyss (*Abgrund*); in all forms, Being is radically different from particular entities, including even the loftiest concepts and ideas or even the highest subject God. One does not talk of God and religion in the same way one talks about hammers, doors and tables.

Heidegger's engagement with Schelling tends to be focused on Schelling's most famous work, the *Philosophical Inquiries into the Essence of Human Freedom* (1809; hereafter the *Freedom-essay*). This polemic essay was incredibly influential as a back-and-forth between Schelling's own views, on the one hand, and Spinoza, Kant, Fichte, Hegel and Jacobi, on the other hand. It deals with a vast panoply of issues, including pantheism, freedom, ground, essence, evil, system, and much more. Heidegger's most extensive discussion of the *Freedom-essay* comes in three of his lecture courses (1927/28, 1936 and 1941/42). His interpretation and appreciation of Schelling evolve throughout these lectures, most notably turning the most critical in the last version. We base our reading of Heidegger's critique of Schelling for the most part, though not exclusively, on the 1941/42 lectures, since it is his last extensive writing on Schelling's philosophy¹³. Initially taking

¹¹ M. Heidegger, *Schelling: Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit* (1809), ed. by I. Schüßler, Frankfurt a. M., Klosterman, 1988, XLII, pp. 113; Eng. trans. by J. Stambaugh, *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, Athens, Ohio University Press, 1985, pp. 66.

¹² *Ibidem*.

¹³ We cannot do justice in this short essay to the intricacies of Heidegger's evolving interpretation and appreciation of Schelling throughout his various

Schelling as an ally in seeing the demerits of the philosophical tradition, Heidegger moves to criticize Schelling for failing to move determinatively beyond that tradition.

Heidegger is correct to say that Schelling is critical of the modern philosophical tradition. In his *Weltalter* (1815), Schelling puts his critique most directly: «The main weakness of all modern philosophy»¹⁴ is that it «lacks an intermediate concept»¹⁵ with the result that «everything that does not *have being* is nothing, and everything that is not spiritual in the highest sense is material in the crudest sense, and everything that is not morally free is mechanical, and everything that is not intelligent is uncomprehending»¹⁶. For Schelling, a binary way of thinking dominated the Western tradition, forcing it into a logic of either/or.

Heidegger appreciates this opening move for two reasons, namely that Schelling opposes, on the one hand, subjectivism (or: a binary opposition between subject and object) and, on the other hand, a logic that prioritizes the epistemological question of knowing and the theological question of the ground over the ontological question of Being. Both points are deemed to be underlying in the idealisms of Kant and Fichte. In the *Freedom*-essay, this takes shape as Schelling's observation that modern philosophy came to a stalemate between idealism and realism: whereas idealistic philosophy lacks access to and a proper grasp of being (Kant, Fichte), realistic philosophy lacks access to and a proper grasp of freedom (Spinoza, French materialism). This forces philosophy at the turning point of the 19th century to choose

lectures. We agree with Sylvaine Gourdain that Heidegger's reading of Schelling serves to inform his own shifts in his thinking, most importantly the *Kehre* (See: S. Gourdain, *Sortir du transcendantal: Heidegger et sa lecture de Schelling*, Paris, Ousia, 2018).

¹⁴ F.W.J. Schelling, *Weltalter*, in *Schellings Sämtliche Werke*, ed. by K.F.A. Schelling, Stuttgart-Augsburg, J.G. Cotta, 1861, I, 8, p. 286; Eng. trans. by J. Wirth, *The Ages of the World* (Third Draft, 1815), New York, State University of New York Press, 2000, p. 64.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

between either a systematic account of reality (Spinoza) or an (irrational) acceptance of freedom (Fichte, Jacobi). Schelling was unwilling to make either sacrifice¹⁷.

All of this is music to the ears of the Freiburg philosopher. Good intentions aside, though, Heidegger judges Schelling's attempts as unsuccessful. Though Schelling's distinction between ground and that which exists is similar to what Heidegger calls the ontological difference between Being and entities, Heidegger notes how Schelling moves insufficiently beyond the tradition and remains caught in ontotheology. Schelling, to Heidegger, ultimately still reduces the ontological question of being to the theological question of God. This is because Schelling holds that not only being is the ground of God, but that being cannot be unless it is within God:

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* [what is before] of the ground in so far as the ground, even as such, could not exist if God did not exist *actu*¹⁸.

True enough, God is for Schelling the ultimate ground of being, which leads Heidegger to argue that Schelling's philosophy is essentially «a theology in the primordial and essential sense that comprehension (*logos*) of entities as a whole asks about the ground of being, and this ground is called *theos*, God»¹⁹. Moreover, the ultimate ground of Being for Schelling is a groundlessness within God, the highest subject, and not a ground outside of God. Subsequently, the ontological question becomes

¹⁷ Cf. Vanden Auweele, *Exceeding Reason: Freedom and Religion in Schelling and Nietzsche*, pp. 26-30.

¹⁸ F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der Menschlichen Freiheit*, in *Schellings Sämtliche Werke*, ed. by K.F.A. Schelling, Stuttgart-Augsburg, J.G. Cotta, 1861, I, 7, p. 358; Eng. trans. by J. Love and J. Schmidt, *Philosophical Investigation into the Essence of Human Freedom*, New York, State University of New York Press, 2006, p. 28.

¹⁹ Heidegger, *Schelling*, p. 87; Eng. trans., p. 50.

a theological question, again, because the ultimate subject is the ultimate ground of being. Not the transcendental (Kant), but the divine subject this time. Heidegger's verdict: Schelling saw the problems of the philosophical tradition but failed to overcome them.

2. *On Ground, Subjectivism and Systematicity*

For Heidegger, Schelling remains entrapped in ontotheology by reducing the ontological question of original being to the theological question of God. This boils down to three issues within Schelling's philosophy: the confusion of God with Being, the subjectification of the ground, and the systematic coordination of Being and entities. These elements cloud a more apposite understanding of Being and God. Having discussed the first issue above, we focus on subjectivism and systematicity in this section.

Once there is a subject, there is an object to that subject, and inevitably a binary dichotomy and subordination of object-subject. Even the highest subject cannot escape this logic, *dixit* Heidegger, and when the highest subject is God, then the world becomes an object to that highest subject. Not only does this entrap philosophical thought in dualism, but it also projects certain human characteristics on the ultimate being, such as egotism and self-centeredness. As such, the ground of entities becomes something that wants, desires and needs. In fact, the *Freedom*-essay can be read in a way that supports Heidegger's view, for instance, when Schelling argues that God is not yet God before creation as he must emerge from his own ground – «that which in God himself is not *he himself*»²⁰ – to become himself. In language reminiscent of Jakob Böhme, Schelling puts this move as follows:

It is the yearning the eternal One feels to give birth to itself. The yearning is not the One itself but is after all co-eternal with it. The yearning wants to give birth to God,

²⁰ Schelling, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, p. 359; Eng. trans., p. 28.

that is, unfathomable unity, but in this respect there is not yet unity in the yearning itself. Hence, it is, considered for itself, also will; but will in which there is no understanding and, for that reason, also not independent and complete will, since the understanding is really the will in will²¹.

When there are desires and needs in the origin, God, there is unfreedom. If to be God, God *must* reveal Himself, then how is that revelation free? Heidegger writes in 1941/42: «Why must God himself be necessarily revealing? Because he is God. And God is him only as the existing God. (A God, not existing, that is, not showing and self-presenting, is not God.) To exist is called: self-revelation»²². Schelling admits as much by calling the «will [...] primal being [*Ursein*]»²³, holding that God's self-willing is his will to become manifest as a person, to constitute himself in the act of creation.

Schelling thus seems to collapse the distinction between God's ground and that which exists, since the ground is but the yearning will to exist. Heidegger writes: «The original yearning, the eternal ground is also will, the will without understanding; without understanding but already will; directed towards understanding»²⁴ and earlier already holds that «will is the will of understanding [...], understanding is what truly wills, strives for itself in realization and posits this (Idea)»²⁵. Heidegger continues by suggesting that Schelling's argument is circular: reveals and actualizes himself (*causa sui*), without any real change in the process of God's emergence from the ungrounded ground. Creation is thus not only becoming but more properly a «letting-be», «letting-become in the becoming of the absolute», letting the self be itself, namely, revelation. Heidegger writes: «If the absolute is

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² M. Heidegger, *Die Metaphysik des deutschen Idealismus (Schelling)*, in *Gesamtausgabe*, ed. by G. Seubold, Frankfurt a. M., Klosterman, 1991, II, p. 127.

²³ Schelling, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, p. 350; Eng. trans., p. 21.

²⁴ Heidegger, *Die Metaphysik des deutschen Idealismus*, p. 124.

²⁵ Ivi, p. 88.

spirit, that which exists, unconditioned subjectivity, then the priority of the absolute shows its certainty, truth, its revelation, its existence, the priority of the *subjectum* as such»²⁶. Philipp Höfele points out the evolution in Heidegger's interpretation of Schelling: if in 1936 Heidegger still acknowledges the internal tension as the binding between ground and existence in the absolute, in 1941 he takes this inner opposition to be transcended in the unity, labeled as the «knowing will»²⁷. What Schelling then supposedly means by the «mere ground of existence» only connects to existence.

Heidegger's critique of subjectivism leads onwards to a more general critique of systematical thinking. This is because, God, as the highest subject, can be comprehended by mere rational and systematic thinking. Heidegger does so by taking issue with Schelling's point: «In the divine understanding there is a system; yet God himself is not a system, but rather a life»²⁸. For Heidegger, this claim means that Schelling has given up his attempt to move beyond idealism. A system, to Heidegger, is simply «ordering things in such a way that not only is what is present and occurring distributed and preserved according to an already existent network of places, but order in such a way that the order itself is thereby first projected»²⁹. Any system of thinking ends up imposing order rather than being true to the internal connection between entities. Systems are austere, prone to lifeless distinctions, and lack animation. God himself is a life rather than just a system: prior to creation, God is unconscious, and he gains true self-understanding in coming to reveal himself as a personified God upon creation. God's self-understanding is systematic understanding, which can be grasped by human reason. In this sense, the life of God is a life coming to be subordinated into a system. The criticisms of subjectivism and systematicity go hand in hand.

²⁶ Ivi, p. 119.

²⁷ Höfele, *Wollen und Lassen*, p. 416.

²⁸ Schelling, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, p. 399; Eng. trans., p. 62.

²⁹ Heidegger, *Schelling*, pp. 44-45; Eng. trans., pp. 25-26.

Schelling's account of the divine system might then escape Heidegger's lifelessness objection but not the subjectivism-systematic objection.³⁰ Indeed, Schelling argues for the distinction between ground and existence, the jointure of being, i.e., a kind of system that raptures or opens the idealistic system, but this difference is eventually unified in the divine personality, the highest subject. Schelling's philosophy seems to remain in the tradition of transcendental philosophy.

Heidegger addresses the problem with this point of view most directly in his later writings on technology (*The Question Concerning Technology* of 1953). Heidegger's reservations with regard to technology can be viewed as a radicalized version of the subjectivism-system problem in the mid-1930s. Technology is not just a collection of techniques or methodology, but a way of approaching nature³¹. According to Heidegger, technology is a peculiar way of revealing that 'challenges' and 'orders' nature and clouds up Being. Through technology, nature becomes a resource for hu-

³⁰ Heidegger thus believes that Schelling's account of God's subjectivity is a projection of human subjectivity. In the same vein, Ben Vedder suggests that the idea of God as *causa sui* entails the idea of 'self-making'. In the godless modern world, so Vedder argues, human beings claim God's power of *causa sui* as the first and highest entity for themselves, and what was once considered to have been created by God is now considered a human product mastered and controlled by humans. The relation of God, as the highest subject, to the world of created things is transferred to the human subject who stands over a world of objects. Conversely, we model God's relation to the world after our relationship with the world (B. Vedder, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Religion: From God to Gods*, Pittsburg, Duquesne University Press, 2006, pp. 124-126, pp. 161-162). Similarly, Christopher Yates argues that in his 1936 reading of Schelling, Heidegger appreciates Schelling's attempt to move beyond the kind of subjectivism that «man is not the author and arbiter of all things» and intends to overcome the incompatibility between system and freedom. Still, Heidegger nonetheless remains skeptical about whether a manipulative use of reason would creep in as long as a certain kind of system remains in Schelling's philosophy (Yates, *The Poetic Imagination*, p. 98).

³¹ M. Heidegger, *Die Frage nach der Technik (1953)*, in *Gesamtausgabe: Vorträge und Aufsätze*, ed. by F.-W. von Hermann, Frankfurt a. M., Klosterman, 2000, VII, p. 13; Eng. trans. by D. Krell, *The Question Concerning Technology*, London-New York, Routledge, 1977, p. 222.

man manipulation and without intrinsic value, which subsequently erodes human value since human entities are part of nature: «Only to the extent that man for his part is already challenged to exploit the energies of nature can this revealing that orders happen»³². Technology reduces nature to a 'thing'. Ironically, this was exactly Schelling's indictment of Spinoza's materialism in the *Freedom-essay*: «The error of his system is by no means due to the fact that he posits all *things in God*, but to the fact that they are *things* – to the abstract conception of the world and its creatures»³³.

Modern philosophy is then without a real divine (*Entgötterung*)³⁴. This does not mean that modern thought is subjected to «an elimination of the gods»³⁵ or that all philosophy is a «crude atheism»³⁶, but that understanding God as the self-causing cause bars a true understanding of God. God is reduced to a product of human reason that completes our systematic ontological account of being. The coupling of *logos* and *theos* is a dead end, or as John Smith puts it:

With his rejection of theo-logy for the sake of a different mode of analysis, one could say that Heidegger rejects the God that is associated with *logos*, or more precisely, indicates and points to a sphere prior to that illuminated by *logos* and hence he can circumscribe the realm of that God/*logos*³⁷.

³² Ivi, p. 17; Eng. trans., p. 225.

³³ Schelling, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, p. 349; Eng. trans., p. 20.

³⁴ Cf. M. Heidegger, *Die Zeit des Weltbildes*, in *Gesamtausgabe: Holzwege*, ed. by F.-W. von Hermann, Frankfurt a. M., Klosterman, 2003, V, p. 76; Eng. trans. by M. Grene, *The Age of the World View*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 58.

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁷ J. Smith, *Dialogues between Faith and Reason*, New York, Cornell University Press, 2011, p. 192.

The Modern God is a counterfeit double of God as the *causa sui* is such that man can neither «pray nor sacrifice to this God. Before the *causa sui*, man can neither fall to his knees in awe nor can he play music and dance before this God»³⁸. And so, Schelling fails to move beyond ontotheology because God, not being, is the ultimate ground; God creates out of a necessity to reveal himself and so is ultimately a subject towering over an object, and, for Heidegger, all of this ultimately leads to a godless world of meaningless nihilism.

3. *Schelling's Retort: The Eternal Past*

Heidegger thus argues that Schelling remains stuck in the long tradition of ontotheology. The main reasons for this are his (1) collapsing of the ground with the existence of God, (2) his postulation of the ground of particular entities as a subject (subjectivism), and (3) the systematic pretensions of his thought. We will discuss these three objections in turn by means of Schelling's work in and after 1809, as well as offer a retort in Schelling's stead.

Schelling is vividly aware of the constitutive distinction between ground and that which exists, and how knowing and describing both requires different methods. He will, however, not follow Heidegger in denying all knowledge of the ground. This is most overt in the work Schelling endeavored to complete after publishing the *Freedom*-essay. Starting in 1811, Schelling resolved to publish a trilogy on *The Ages of the World* (Weltalter), which are the eternal past, the eternal present and the eternal future. The work was never finalized. Three versions of the first age of the world are available (written in 1811, 1813 and 1815), while numerous other drafts were regrettably lost in a bombing of the

³⁸ M. Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz*, in *Gesamtausgabe*, ed. by F.-W. von Hermann, Frankfurt a. M., Klosterman, 2006, XI, p. 77; Eng. trans. by J. Stambaugh, *Identity and Difference*, New York, Harper & Row, 1969, p. 72.

Munich archive³⁹. The first 'age' of the world describes the eternal past, a past that is not merely *quantitatively* or *mechanically* but qualitatively past. In other words, a 'real' past has a quality that makes it distinct from the present, namely through a decision: «How few people know anything of a real past! Without a vital present, born by a real division [*Scheidung*] from the past, no such thing exists»⁴⁰. The present does not flow seamlessly from the eternal past but rather is separated from the past through a decision. Compare the following example. If I am no longer an alcoholic, I have left my drinking days in the past. This is the case not because I simply do not drink but because I decide not to drink, where the past is put in the past through that decision. It can re-emerge (with a vengeance) when our attention to keep it in the past fades.

There is a structural similarity between Heidegger's distinction between Being and entities, on the one hand, and Schelling's distinction between the eternal past and the present, on the other hand. Both are separated from each other radically. Heidegger's most pointed criticism of Schelling's understanding of 'ground', however, is that the latter would use the logic of entities to understand that ground. In language that Schelling would adopt later in his career, this would mean that Schelling uses a 'negative philosophy', a science of concepts, to understand what precedes rationality. This, in turn, would make the distinction between entities and ground insufficiently radical.

Heidegger could not be more wrong here. Schelling expressly laments about those of his contemporaries who make this very mistake. He puts it eloquently in the 1815 draft of *Weltalter*:

³⁹ For extensive discussion of these drafts: D. Vanden Auweele, *The Failure to think Freedom: Schelling's Drafts of Weltalter*, in *Freedom and Creation in Schelling*, eds. by H. Tegtmeier and D. Vanden Auweele, Stuttgart, frommann-holzboog, 2022, pp. 137-159.

⁴⁰ F.W.J. Schelling, *Die Weltalter: Fragmente*, ed. by M. Schröter, München, Biedersterin Verlag und Leibniz Verlag, 1946, p. 11; Eng. trans. by J. Lawrence, *The Ages of the World (First Draft 1811)*, New York, State University of New York Press, 2019, p. 66.

Since the beginning, many have desired to penetrate this silent realm of the past prior to the world in order to get, in actual comprehension, behind the great process of which they are in part cooperative members and in part sympathetic members. But most of them lacked the requisite humility and self-denial because they wanted to tackle everything at once with supreme concepts⁴¹.

Any logic based on concepts – even the loftiest and most supreme – will simply not do to understand the eternal past. Schelling points particularly at Hegel's development of a logic of concepts (a 'negative philosophy') to understand what precedes concepts and can only be understood through a different science (called 'positive philosophy') Hegel would not object. In his way of understanding God as the ground of being, God «takes refuge in the concept [*in den Begriff flüchtet*]»⁴². For Schelling, however, such a way of thinking drives the science of conceptual reason beyond its limit; it «wants to be positive»⁴³ or «the philosophy that Hegel presented is the negative driven beyond its limits»⁴⁴. Negative philosophy by itself is not «wrong, only lacking [...] Logical systems become wrong when they exclude the positive and propose themselves as positive»⁴⁵. Put otherwise, a negative philosophy takes conceptual possibility as the limit to understanding reality, and this is not problematic as long as it does not fail to recognize that even conceptual possibility is not self-grounded.

⁴¹ Schelling, *Weltalter* (1815), p. 286; Eng. trans., p. 63.

⁴² G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion. Teil 3. Die vollendete Religion*, Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte, vol. 5, ed. by W. Jaeschke, Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag, 1984, p. 267; Eng. trans. by P.C. Hodgson, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. The Lectures of 1827*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 487.

⁴³ F.W.J. Schelling, *Gründung der positiven Philosophie*, in *Schellings Sämtliche Werke*, ed. by K.F.A. Schelling, Stuttgart-Augsburg, J.G. Cotta, 1861, II, 3, p. 80; Eng. trans. by B. Matthews, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, New York, State University of New York Press, 2007, p. 145.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁵ Id., *System der Weltalter*, p. 12.

That ground cannot be known as a conceptual possibility but only as a reality: «It is a false objection when one says that we cannot imagine any reality that precedes all possibility! Indeed, human production can only be foreseen from their possibility. But there are also things that can first be seen through their reality [*durch ihre Wirklichkeit*]»⁴⁶.

If a negative science of reason is not an appropriate way of understanding the ground of being or the eternal past, then the question is: how can one *know* the ground of being? Schelling struggled for decades to answer this question. In the drafts of the *Weltalter*, Schelling uses terms such as vision and inspiration. He puts it in the 1813 draft as follows: to know, we require a «doubling of ourselves, this secret intercourse between the two essences, one questioning and one answering, one ignorant though seeking to know and one knowledgeable without knowing its knowledge»⁴⁷. Without such an inspirational vision, we would be stuck with the «belabored concepts of a sterile and dispirited dialectic»⁴⁸. In his last philosophy, Schelling would become critical of these attempts at mysticism (or theosophy). He critiques himself by criticizing Jakob Böhme, describing theosophy as follows: «[Theosophy] attributes an immediate *vision* of divine nature and of the divine origin of things to itself»⁴⁹. Despite various other criticisms, Schelling believes that the lively, organic ways of imagination in theosophy are devoid of self-understanding as they unfold⁵⁰.

⁴⁶ Id., *Philosophie der Offenbarung 1841/42*, ed. by M. Frank, Frankfurt a. M., Suhrkamp, 1977, p. 161.

⁴⁷ Id., *Die Weltalter: Fragmente (1813)*, in *Nachlaßband*, ed. by M. Schröter, München, Biedersterin Verlag und Leibniz Verlag, 1946, p. 113-114; Eng. trans. by J. Norman, *The Ages of the World (Second Draft 1813)*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1997, p. 115.

⁴⁸ Ivi, p. 115. Eng. trans., p. 117.

⁴⁹ Cf. Id., *Gründung*, p. 127. Eng. trans., p. 179.

⁵⁰ Ivi, p. 124. Eng. trans., p. 177. For a sustained treatment of how the absolute comes to give itself to be known, see P. David, *Schelling. De l'absolu à l'histoire*, Paris, PUF, 1988.

In his last philosophy, Schelling turns towards a philosophical position called ‘metaphysical empiricism’ which is the view that the metaphysical shows itself empirically. Here, the possibility and nature of something are known through its reality rather than through the concept we form of it. Metaphysical empiricism axiomatically accepts the metaphysical as the absolute *prius* of being and notes how the metaphysical reveals itself – though in hidden and furtive ways – in the empirical. In his Munich Lectures on *The System of the Ages of the World*, Schelling names three such revelations:

Nature, which is a book written from the inside and the outside, it is divine revelation and holy scripture. But he who moves to nature without an idea of God shall read nothing in it, then it is not a primitive original revelation, not a holy scripture, only a marginal note. [...] History, but it is also in and for itself as little intelligible as nature. And then remains the Holy Scripture itself as immediate and specific revelation of God to man⁵¹.

This means that philosophical attention to nature, history and revelation, if we *positively* accept these as revelations of the metaphysical, will reveal in a fragmented and tentative way knowledge of the ‘eternal past’. For this reason, Schelling develops a philosophy of nature, a philosophy of mythology and a philosophy of revelation. These sources enrich a purely negative philosophy by providing the «given, factual, historical [*Gegebenes, Tatsächliches, Geschebens*]» evidence by which God revealed himself as «concrete, real and empirical [*konkreter, reeller und empirischer*]»⁵², and so mediate our understanding of the metaphysical in a way that does not resort to mysticism.

Schelling thus not only accepts a real and radical distinction between the ground and entities, but also recognizes how different forms of knowing apply to each. Heidegger’s criticism on this

⁵¹ Schelling, *System der Weltalter*, pp. 84-85.

⁵² Ivi, p. 59.

first point fails to recognize the innovations of Schelling's last philosophy.

4. *Schelling's Retort: The Divine Person*

Let us turn to Heidegger's second objection against Schelling's philosophy, i.e., that it ultimately collapses into subjectivism because of taking God as the ultimate ground of reality. For Heidegger, this move entraps thought in a subject-object dichotomy wherein God, as the highest subject, is the creator of the world, and thus of an object that fulfills his own ends. But what kind of subject is God for Schelling?

Schelling indeed sees God as the ultimate subject, though a peculiar subject not entrapped in a simple subject-object dichotomy. This is because God does not need to posit another being to sustain Himself, and so His relation with the rest of all beings is not a subject-and-object relation. Heidegger's misunderstanding arises from misreading God's agency in creating the world. God does not *need* to create the world as He is already complete in himself. God is free to will to create but also not to will. In the 1815 *Weltalter* fragment, Schelling argues that God's essence is eternal freedom, which is the will without wants or desires, a will-less will, i.e., «the will insofar as it actually does not will»⁵³. God's creation is an entirely free act, creating or not creating does not affect God's essence. Hans-Joachim Friedrich and Lore Hühn even point out that this will-less state is mirrored in the attitude of *Gelassenheit* or releasement – the phrase that the late Heidegger himself attributes to being⁵⁴. More recently, Höfele makes a similar point that the late Heidegger wants to move beyond the

⁵³ Id., *Weltalter* (1815), p. 236; Eng. trans., p. 25.

⁵⁴ Cf. H.-J. Friedrich, *Der Ungrund der Freiheit im Denken von Böhme, Schelling und Heidegger*, Stuttgart, frommann-holzboog, 2009, p. 23; L. Hühn, *Heidegger-Schelling im philosophischen Zwiegespräch – Der Versuch einer Einleitung*, in *Heidegger's Schelling-Seminar (1927/28)*, ed. by L. Hühn and J. Jantzen, Stuttgart, frommann-holzboog, 2010, pp. 19-25.

notion of willing and non-willing and argue for a ‘third type of will’ as *Gelassenheit*; he nonetheless fails to see that Schelling has surpassed him to seek the enabling condition of this will⁵⁵.

While some of the language of the *Freedom*-essay can indeed be misleading, Schelling ultimately makes a subtle point about God’s freedom to create. On the one hand, Schelling repeatedly describes God as ‘Herr des Seins’, as a being that governs the world. Read, for instance, in *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung* (1831/32; *Urfassung* hereafter): «Only *that* god who has a world is truly a god – only *that* god who is entitled to have power and glory is truly a god»⁵⁶. This suggests, indeed, that God is a subject that governs the world. On the other hand, though, this point is qualified by the fact that the act of creation is an expression of pure freedom and love: «Without divine freedom in creation, there could not be the freedom of world governance and hence no providence»⁵⁷. Were creation somehow an act that followed a logic of control – that God uses the world as a means for His self-completion, then He would not be free, and God would indeed get caught in a dependence on objects. Konstanze Sommer suggests that, in fact, God’s free creation in Schelling is in a way similar to the revealing of being itself as the ground of beings in Heidegger: the latter can also be called a kind of «creation»⁵⁸ and being has a «creative»⁵⁹ power, since the free revealing being is thought as the self-generating nature (*sich selbst hervorbringenden Natur*) in Heidegger.

This argument is consistent with Schelling’s most important argument in the *Freedom essay*, namely, that God allows humans to

⁵⁵ Cf. Höfele, *Wollen und Lassen*, pp. 437-38.

⁵⁶ F.W.J. Schelling, *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung*, ed. by W. Ehrhardt, Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag, 1992, p. 107. Our translation of passages in *Urfassung* benefitted from Henning Tegtmeier’s unpublished translation of that work.

⁵⁷ Ivi, p. 136.

⁵⁸ Cf. K. Sommer, *Zwischen Metaphysik und Metaphysikkritik*, Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag, 2015, pp. 305.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*.

be free, which is something that only a free God can do. Human freedom means that we humans are capable of good and evil. God, who is always good himself, bestows on human entities the freedom to be either good or evil. With this claim, Schelling opposes the whole rationalistic tradition in philosophy that aligns freedom and autonomy with goodness. Unlike rationalism, Schelling conceives evil as a manifestation of human freedom, too: «For every essence can only reveal itself in the 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»⁶⁰. God's essence as eternal freedom must be able to reveal itself in its opposite. He does not simply want to dominate and manipulate the world for his own needs, and therefore he does not create subservient entities who always obey his orders but free human entities with the power to disobey.

Assuming that Schelling's God uses the world to fulfill himself, Heidegger argues that Schelling is a modern subjectivist. For him, the modern problem of subjectivism arises in theology because even God is conceived as an egocentric subject. But this reading cannot be applied to Schelling, given that Schelling's idea of God is not that of such a subject but of a loving and generous being. What is more, Schelling himself criticizes a similar subjectivism in Kant's and Fichte's idealism. Our freedom enables us even to take over God's role and claim governance of the world⁶¹. The problems with subjectivism are not theological problems but stem from human free choice. It is Heidegger who reads human subjectivism back into God, not recognizing the fundamental distinction Schelling makes between God and finite individuals. Thus, although both Schelling and Heidegger take human existence as such to be the main source of disturbance within the

⁶⁰ Schelling, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, pp. 373-374; Eng. trans., p. 41. For further discussion of this important point, see: Vanden Auweele, *Exceeding Reason: Freedom and Religion in Schelling and Nietzsche*, ch. 3.

⁶¹ Schelling, *Urfassung*, p. 214.

world and for the order of nature, they identify the source of this problem differently.

Heidegger also argues that in the anthropocentric modern world, God is simply posited as existing by humans – in order to prevent the infinite regress of finding the first cause. God is thus conceived as a *causa sui*, a self-causing cause, but not as truly living. This critique cannot apply to Schelling either, since Schelling himself argues against the rationalistic account of God as a lifeless substance. Schelling criticizes both the idealistic account of God as a mere idea and Spinoza's notion of the *causa sui*, which is why he ascribes actual freedom to an actual God. As Walter Ehrhardt comments: «In Schelling's philosophy, God does not appear as *causa sui*, but as a free act, because here freedom should be the highest, not the principle of sufficient reason»⁶². Schelling's entire philosophical development can be viewed as seeking a way to think of a free and living God in a proper manner, so that God would no longer be reduced to a mere object of thinking.

Schelling makes this clear in his critique of a merely negative philosophy, which deals with all entities, including God, by means of mere conceptual analysis. In such a framework, no real entities are considered. As regards the existence of God, negative philosophy argues that «God, *if* he exists, must be that which [exists] *a priori*, in no other way can he exist»⁶³. God's existence follows then from his essence. This is the ontological argument for God's existence. Schelling further illustrates this point by alluding to Kant's critique of the ontological argument. He points out that Kant already realized the problem with the ontological proof of God; namely, that «there is something very strange in the fact, that once we assume something to exist we cannot avoid inferring that something exists necessarily»⁶⁴. Kant then argues that God's existence cannot be proven on the basis of the mere con-

⁶² W. Ehrhardt, 'Freiheit ist unser und der Gottheit Höchstes' – ein Rückweg zur Freiheitsschrift?, in *Schellings Weg zur Freiheitsschrift*, ed. by H. Baumgartner and W. Jacobs, Stuttgart, frommann-holzboog, 1996, pp. 250-251.

⁶³ Schelling, *Gründung*, p. 156; Eng. trans., p. 199.

⁶⁴ Ivi, p. 166; Eng. trans., p. 206.

cept of God⁶⁵. This is why Kant limits reason to contemplating the mere idea of God without making claims about his existence, at least not within theoretical philosophy. The ontological proof of God's existence in theoretical philosophy is considered unsuccessful since it does not prove the mind-independent actual existence of God.

Schelling moves beyond Kant and argues for the actual existence of God. At the same time, he maintains that God cannot be merely posited by humans as a necessarily existing being because he does not come to reveal himself in the world by necessity. His existence as the creator of the world is a relative or contingent necessity, i.e., necessary for the created world. He who exists by himself is without an antecedent ground. Schelling writes:

Thus, *if* he [God] exists, he can only be *in* and, as it were, *before* himself, that is, *he can only* be that which is *before* his divinity; but if before he is divine he is that which is, then for this very reason he is that which precedes his concept, and thus, all concepts⁶⁶.

God is the supreme being, and «if he exists, he *can* only be that which necessarily exists»⁶⁷. Claiming that God's existence is a conceptual necessity only means that existence must be ascribed to God in relation to creation; his existence as such is inaccessible to *a priori* reasoning. Schelling's actual *a posteriori* historical demonstration of God's existence appears in his philosophy of mythology and revelation. This is his way of restoring true divinity in the modern world, and this engagement with actual history is not something Heidegger has thought of or simply does not want to acknowledge. But it is undeniable that Schelling's positive philosophy already anticipates Heidegger's critique of the distorted images of divinity in modernity.

⁶⁵ Cf. *ivi*, p. 83; Eng. trans., p. 147.

⁶⁶ *Ivi*, p. 158; Eng. trans., p. 200.

⁶⁷ *Ivi*, p. 159; Eng. trans., p. 201.

5. *Schelling's Retort: The Organic System*

Heidegger's final criticism of Schelling concerns Schelling's appeal to the idea of a 'system.' For Heidegger, any philosophy that aims to be systematic will also ultimately succumb to coordinating its concepts in such a way as to disconnect itself from its original fount, the ground of being. For Heidegger, systems cannot do justice to Being. Heidegger follows Nietzsche in his famous phrase that the will to system is a lack of integrity. While there is no use in denying that Schelling is a systematic philosopher, his way of understanding a philosophical system does not fit neatly with the sort of rationalist systems Heidegger targets with his criticism. In this section, we will make some notes as to Schelling's reevaluation of systematic philosophy as it relates to his philosophy of religion.

One year after publishing the *Freedom-Essay*, Schelling held a series of private lectures in Stuttgart to a select group of high functionaries. Schelling's son would later publish his father's notes together with the notes of one attendant, now known as the *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*. In that text, Schelling opens with the programmatic statement that he is on the look-out for a «world system» (*Weltsystem*), which should «[...] not exclude anything (for instance, nature), not subordinate anything one-sidedly or suppress anything altogether»⁶⁸. This sentiment is repeated twenty years later in the first version of the lectures on *The Philosophy of Revelation*, where Schelling promises to develop a system of philosophy that should be «strong enough to endure the test [*Probe*] of life, strong enough not to pale [*erblassen*] in front of cold reality»⁶⁹. These programmatic statements suggest that Schelling is aware of the danger that a system might rob reality of its richness.

Schelling is at least as critical as Heidegger of past attempts at philosophical systems. The difference is that Schelling does not want to throw out the baby with the bathwater. In his view, most

⁶⁸ Id., *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*, in *Schellings Sammtliche Werke*, ed. by K.F.A. Schelling, Stuttgart-Augsburg, J.G. Cotta, 1860, I, 7, p. 420.

⁶⁹ Id., *Urfassung*, p. 3.

previous attempts at a comprehensive philosophical system have entertained a common mistake, namely, a binary understanding of systematic relationship according to which predicates can either apply or not apply to a certain subject. Such a logic rigidifies reality in accordance with a logic of either/or logic, whereas Schelling himself is more interested in grasping how reality is constantly in passing from one transitional state to the next. At the most abstract level, this means that the classical dualism of 'being' and 'not being' needs to be complemented by a third category, namely 'becoming'. A philosophical system that accounts for 'not being', 'becoming' and 'being' at the same time, is one that is not abstractly imposed upon reality but distilled from reality. It is metaphysics *a posteriori*. «The true system» Schelling puts emphatically, «cannot be *invented* [erfunden], it can only be found as an in-itself already *present* [vorhandenes] system, namely in divine understanding»⁷⁰.

Schelling is aware, however, that the term 'system' might leave a bad taste in his readers' mouths after Jacobi's interventions against Spinoza in the pantheism debate. Therefore, Schelling repeatedly distinguishes between a good and a bad sense of the term 'system'. Bad systems are simply imposed upon reality, usually *a priori*, and force reality to fit neat categories. A good system is a system that develops alongside reality. Consider these telling reflections on the nature of the true system of philosophy:

A system in the bad sense occurs as a lack of viability [*Mangel an Entwicklungsfähigkeit*], that is seen as a self-enclosure of ready-made truths. Bad systems originate from holding on to one and the same point of view. [...] But system also means harmonious succession [*harmonische Aufeinanderfolge*], like the rhythm of notes in music. The better side of a system is not such a standing still, but development towards the organism of science⁷¹.

⁷⁰ Id., *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*, pp. 421-422.

⁷¹ Id., *System der Weltalter*, p. 19.

A system in the bad sense of the word, like anything noxious, is what is at a standstill, what lacks the strength for development and enhancement and seeing things through. Thus the difference between the different systems arises from the fact that they become stuck at a certain standpoint. The perspective itself is not anything false, but only the fact that one gets stuck there. At home in a true and comprehensive system, one is always able to educate oneself and develop things further⁷².

Schelling's rethinking of the philosophical system can be illustrated by his philosophy of mythology. By using the term 'philosophy of mythology, Schelling wants to signal a very peculiar approach to mythology. While most approaches to mythology in Schelling's days seek to interpret mythology allegorically⁷³, Schelling wants to interpret mythology literally and as a 'fact'. Rather than merely subordinating mythology to a readymade conception, Schelling takes it as a given that needs to be explained rather than merely incorporated into an already present system. This involves then close attention to the origin, content and, particularly, development of mythology. Schelling calls this approach – borrowing a phrase from Coleridge – a tautegorical interpretation of mythology, claiming that «mythology is originally meant as the doctrine of the gods and history of the gods, that it originally has *religious meanings*»⁷⁴.

⁷² Id., *Weltalter* (1811), p. 48; Eng. trans., p. 108.

⁷³ Some examples. To David Hume, mythology is a psychological response to certain experiences, a psychological coping mechanism, which induces human beings to deify natural happenings because of fear and superstition. In Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, mythology is taken to be an incomplete, partial expression of spirit that has not come to full self-realization and self-cognition. In what Schelling calls an allegorical approach to mythology, mythology expresses rational, ethical, philosophical or historical rather than religious teachings (he refers to the work of Heyne and Hermann). To Schopenhauer, mythology served to satisfy a poetic and artistic drive within ancient people.

⁷⁴ F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophie der Mythologie*, in *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. by K.F.A. Schelling, Stuttgart-Augsburg, J.G. Cotta, 1857, II, 2, pp. 89; Eng. trans. by M.

After discussing other potential interpretations of mythology and their demerits,⁷⁵ Schelling arrives at the philosophical position that God is the point of departure and end of mythology (*terminus ad quem* and *terminus ad quo*). In other words, mythology starts and ends with God, who first appears in archaic unity with humanity prior to its diremption through language and then in his true revelation in Christ. Mythology itself is an unintentional, instinctive invention by humanity in response to the latent memory of the original unity with God. In the mythologies discussed by Schelling (mostly: ancient Oriental, Greek, Roman, Brahman, Egyptian and partly Jewish), there is a move from a blissful unity with divinity (a golden age) that is broken by a fatal human perpetration, leading to a state of separation that is supposed to be undone in a distant future. Schelling pays particular attention to the Greek figure of Dionysus as a figure that encompasses the past, present and future; respectively, the Dionysus Zagreus (son of Zeus and Persephone), the Theban Bacchus (son of Zeus and the mortal Semele) and Dionysus Iakchos (son of Zeus and Demeter).

This short exploration of Schelling's philosophy shows how he rethinks the idea of a philosophical system. Rather than approaching mythology with a ready-made system in mind, Schelling closely investigates mythology so as to discover the internal system within mythology. These findings then serve to enrich, expand and develop the system of thought Schelling had already found in his earlier philosophy. Finally, this approach is supplemented by his philosophy of revelation.

6. Conclusion

This paper began with an account of Heidegger's critique of the modern philosophical tradition, in this case, German Ideal-

Richey and M. Zisselsberger, *Historical-critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, New York, State University of New York Press, 2007, p. 67.

⁷⁵ See: Vanden Auweele, *Exceeding Reason: Freedom and Religion in Schelling and Nietzsche*, ch. 8.

ism, and more precisely, Schelling's philosophy, as an ontotheology. Heidegger raises three objections against Schelling: first, the distinction between ground and that which exists does not work properly in Schelling since Schelling is said to misconceive the ground as a particular being. Second, Heidegger takes Schelling to misrepresent the ultimate ground as the highest subject, God, and thus collapses his philosophy into subjectivism. Third, Schelling's philosophy is a system and, therefore, guilty of rationalistic thinking. Heidegger concludes that Schelling ultimately represents a subjectivism that culminates in modern technology, lifting human existence from its very root.

We have demonstrated, however, that Schelling's philosophy, though it indeed takes God as the ultimate source of all things, is free from most of these charges. Schelling's subtle distinction between God's ground and God's existence escapes Heidegger's first objection. Schelling also makes a sharp distinction between God and finite human entities. Lastly, Schelling even proposes a new notion of system that can respond to *a posteriori* findings without distorting them and merely making them fit in. Moreover, Schelling already anticipates concerns that Heidegger himself is worried about, e.g., the disturbing power of human freedom. Heidegger's labelling of Schelling's philosophy as ontotheology covers up the true value of the latter. A philosophy of God is not a problem, misunderstanding it is⁷⁶.

⁷⁶ The authors would like to thank Henning Tegtmeier, William Desmond and the two anonymous referees for their helpful remarks on previous versions of this paper.