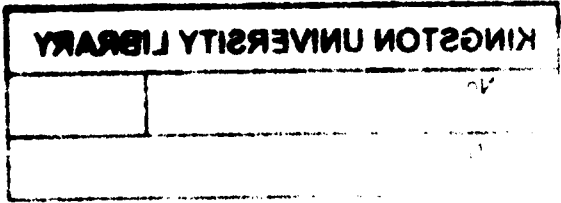


Existential Cosmology

The Foundation of Post-Critical Metaphysics in Schelling

**A thesis submitted to Kingston University London in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.**

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To my mother, in eternal gratitude

‘Perspicaciously, like the coming time’s outcome, the passed beginning’s God, is veiled in darkest night. It is not given to everyone to know the end, only to few to see the beginnings of life, and to even fewer to think through the whole from the first up to the last: strength of soul is required to retain the coherence of the movement from beginning to end. But where only action decides, most seek to reconcile with peaceful general concepts, and a history in which changing scenes of war and peace, pain and lust, danger and salvation, pass in actuality, they seek to represent like a mere succession of thoughts. A light in this darkness is the certainty that the deepest and innermost processes of the human life are the same as those of the universal life. The process which we endeavour to describe, is also the process of the human. Because the concealments of the world are the same as the ones of the human. Only the one who is capable to forcefully turn to the self and to lead his intuition into the deepest inwardness, may see something here, because in the beginnings nothing can be intuited outwardly. All we see has gradually taken shape, from unfathomable depth, into this outwardness. But the largest part turns away from the abysses and the pasts of the own inside with the same dread, as from the depths and concealments of the universal life.’

F.W.J. Schelling, *Ages of the World*, Fragment NL81, 1814
(167-170)

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Abstract

This thesis consists of a study of Schelling's post-critical metaphysics. For the purpose of systematic and historical corroboration, the foundation of Schelling's metaphysics is contextually reconstructed through investigations of Kant's critique of metaphysics and Hegel's transformation of the Kantian problematic. The Romantic and Fichtean background of Schelling's theoretical intervention is also partially reconstructed. On the basis of this contextual presentation, given in the form of a problematic progression, the thesis then develops Schelling's foundational move for the grounding of a post-critical metaphysics as an immanent response to Kant and Hegel. Schelling's position is here proved to consist of a radicalisation of Kant and a superior critique of Hegel's critique of Kant. The second part of the thesis then proceeds to present the elementary components of Schelling's metaphysics: the doctrine of powers, the philosophy of time and the theory of ideas, developed directly out of the foundational grounding excavated in the first part. It is proved that Schelling's reconstruction of metaphysics is essentially powered by the reactivation of figures of thought derived from Platonic ontology and cosmology, rearticulated through productive conjunction with resource offered by the Kantian presentation of the transcendental apparatus. It is argued that the resultant metaphysical outlook, a solid restatement of which is given in the final part of the thesis, informs and grounds all of Schelling's philosophical endeavours, from the early Philosophy of Nature, over the Philosophy of Art, up to the late Philosophy of Mythology and Philosophy of Revelation. Thus this thesis offers an endorsement of the argument for the essential integrity of Schelling's thought – advanced by a number of recent scholars – against the conceptions of discontinuous breaks in Schelling's oeuvre, still prevalent in most of the orthodox views of the history of philosophy. Lastly it is argued that the reconstruction of Schelling's metaphysics, presented in this thesis, must be understood as a powerful vantage point from which to think the possibilities of a contemporary philosophical cosmology.

Index of References

Frequently quoted works are cited directly in the text. All references are to original texts. All translations are my own. The editions and abbreviations used are the following:

- AA** Kant, Immanuel – *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, collected works in the 'Akademieausgabe' published by Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1911 ff. (works quoted as AA I – AA XXIII, references to *Critique of Pure Reason* in the common A/B form)
- GA** Fichte, Johann Gottlieb – Gesamtausgabe, published by *Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1962 ff. (quoted as GA I 1 – GA IV 6)
- HW** Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich – *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, collected works based on *Werke* of 1832-1845, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969-1970, (works quoted as HW I – HW XX)
- Tim, etc.** Plato – *Werke in acht Bänden*, collected dialogues, parallel Greek and German edition, German translations by Friedrich Schleiermacher, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005, (common abbreviations for dialogues used, *Sop.*, 249c-249d, etc.)
- SW** Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph – *Sämmtliche Werke*, collected works edited by K.F.A. Schelling, Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856-1864 (quoted as SW I – SW XIV)

The following texts, all by Schelling but not contained in the collected work, are also frequently quoted:

- INI** *Initia Philosophiae Universae*, Erlangen Lectures WS 1820/1821, edited and published by Horst Fuhrmanns, Bonn: Bouvier, 1969 (quoted as INI)

- PP** *Grundlegung der Positiven Philosophie*, lectures known as Grounding of Positive Philosophy, Munich WS 1832/1833 and SS 1833, edited and published by Horst Fuhrmanns, Torino: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1972 (quoted as PP)
- Pa** *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, lectures on the Philosophy of Revelation, Berlin 1841/1842, in a full transcript by Paulus, edited and introduced by Manfred Frank, 3rd edition, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993 (quoted as Pa)
- T** „Timaeus“, commentary of 1794, edited by Hartmut Buchner, Stuttgart-Bad-Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog (quoted as T)
- WA** *Die Weltalter, Fragmente*, the Ages of the World fragments of 1811 and 1813, published by Manfred Schröter, Munich: Biederstein und Leibniz, 1946 (quoted as WA)

Acknowledgements

Philosophy is a passionate love for wisdom, not something to be achieved and owned, but a perpetual journey towards truth. On this journey there are those who – albeit never fixed and static in their roles – stand as guides and companions who lend a hand or light ahead for a section of the way, and no journey can go far without strong companions. From among the companions of my journey, I want to thank first and foremost my beloved parents whose love and support saved me from falling victim to the aberrations of my path, and whose steadfast characters and lived convictions instilled the love of truth in me which eventually brought me to philosophy. In the academic realm in which I developed and unfolded my passion for philosophy into a grown and solid vocation, I would firstly like to thank all those whose varied perspectives and existences make up the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy in London, this unique heterotopia of a different kind of thought. I want to thank Eric Alliez whose philosophical signature can be discerned throughout this study as his many years of intensive instruction and mentorship introduced me into the art of philosophising and introduced me into an intellectual lineage and tradition of which I am proud to be a part of. I also want to thank Peter Osborne, whose leadership provided the institutional and intellectual space in which I was able to develop, and under whose relentless scrutiny I was constantly forced to hone my thoughts and, hopefully, acquire some of that sharpness and astuteness which distinguishes the very best of the English tradition of thought. I also want to specifically thank Peter Hallward, whose integrity and passionate love for truth and justice continue to inspire me. Moreover, I want to thank Rainer Zimmermann, Manfred Frank and Iain Hamilton Grant for their kind support and for sharing their erudition, their remarkable intellectual energy and their passion for Schelling. Thanks also to Howard Caygill and Philippe Büttgen for having being challenging but sympathetic readers. Among my peers I especially want to thank Hammam Al-Douri for his patience and his generosity and for the constancy of his philosophical vigilance. Lastly, I want to thank all my dear friends and especially Habib, Benedikt, Roberto, Reena, Navid, Darius, Ksenia, Stéphane, Kai, Philipp, Willow, Reham, Yamile, Derya, and my dearest Catherine – although I am the “philosopher”, I am always again humbled as I learn about the love of wisdom from you and together with you. Thank you all.

Introduction

This is a systematic study of the mature philosophical project of F.W.J. Schelling. Thus this is a work in the history of philosophy, however only in the precise sense in which Deleuze's *Nietzsche and Philosophy* is a work in the history of philosophy. For the history of philosophy is only treated in a genuinely philosophical manner when it is not understood as a serial succession of positions forming some kind of steady progression from ignorance to truth, but rather, to use the image given by Kant in the introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, as a metaphysical battlefield, a plane of immanence or a field of forces, on which questions and problems are not solved and set aside but only responded to in always new ways, yet always remaining potentially menacing, and on which the protagonists are not distributed according to static affiliations but rather stay in a state of motion, ever ready to enter into new confrontations or form new and unexpected alliances, each time giving rise to new constellations. In short, the history of philosophy must be constructed as immediately contemporary. Hence it is not the primary goal of this study to trace the development of Schelling's thought, or to illuminate the logic of his intervention in the milieu of German Idealism – although this will also partially happen along the way – but rather the goal is to extract and systematically present the guiding project of Schelling's philosophy, its core or its soul, so to speak, that which remains active and valid beyond the immediate context of its first articulation. Schelling himself sanctions the methodology of this study when he urges the philosopher to subtract from the accidental engagements and expressions of a thinker and from the minor inconsistencies and flaws that mark any living and creative thought, and instead to focus on the essence or the decisive intent of a thinker: 'If one wants to honour a philosopher, one must grasp him where he has not yet proceeded to the consequences – in his fundamental thought [*in seinem Grundgedanken*]... the true thought of a philosopher is the fundamental thought from which he sets out.' (SW XIII 60)

I call this fundamental thought or guiding project of the Schellingian philosophy: existential cosmology. Due to his insistence on the primacy of existence over essence, his conception of freedom as capacity of rupture and decision instead of as historical necessity, and his insights into the unreason that grounds all human existence and all rationality, Schelling figures as something like the grandfather of existentialism in modern philosophy. In this capacity, his influence on Kierkegaard and Heidegger can hardly be overestimated. On the other hand, Schelling is known as the founder of post-Kantian *Naturphilosophie*, as a speculative thinker

of φύσις and κόσμος whose thought attempts to counter the modern conception of the universe as radically indifferent to the existence of life and spirit within it, in turn based on an epistemology which discards all modes of thinking and experiencing the universe except an exclusively mathematical one. In doing so, Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* reactivates a tradition of cosmological thinking that goes back to Plato's *Timaeus*, and in which the aesthetic, spiritual and symbolic experience of the universe stand besides the mathematical conception as equally valid and significant elements of a kind of metacosmology in which Milton's thoughts on the origin, nature and purpose of the universe can be as meaningful as those of Newton, albeit of course of different systematic nature and position. Although founders of modern cosmology such as Kepler – whose world-harmonics derives mathematical regularity of astral bodies from a primary and productive spiritual principle or νοῦς actively generating harmony – were themselves adherents of the Platonic cosmology, by the time Schelling and other Romantic thinkers of nature are voicing their vision of a living universe imbued with spirit, the mechanistic and exclusively mathematical view of the universe has become completely dominant, and as a *Naturphilosoph* and Platonic cosmologist critical of this reductionist view of nature, Schelling has been of great influence on successors like Peirce or Bergson. Thus we discern two seemingly distinct strands in Schelling's thought – existential philosophy and cosmology. The conventional view is that these two orientations can not be integrated at all, being prohibitively antithetical. One urges action in the face of the contingency and absurdity of the human condition, while the other extols the contemplation of harmonious and beautiful patterns in the cosmic edifice. And indeed, Schelling himself was often tempted to present his thought through a constitutive duality (the transcendental and the natural philosophy in the early work and the positive and negative philosophy in the late phase respectively). Consequently, readers of Schelling have generally chosen to emphasise one strand over the other, reading Schelling either as astute analyst of the human condition and thinker of freedom, vertigo and the unconscious, or as the speculative thinker of a vibrant nature and of its evolutive transformations. In contrast, this study will show that in Schelling's thought the existential and the cosmological are inextricably intertwined and mutually dependent elements of one coherent philosophy and that to isolate either would mean to miss the singular power of existential cosmology as philosophical project.

Cosmology is the thought which prioritises the question of genesis, history and ultimate fate of the universe. Existential philosophy is the kind of philosophy which prioritises the radical indeterminacy of the human condition as focus and ground of all philosophical reflexion. In

Schelling these two priorities stand in a synergistic tension which animates the project of existential cosmology. As expressed in the *Ages of the World*, the series of fragments which figure as the apex of this project, Schelling is convinced that 'it is certain, that whoever could write the history of his own life from the ground up, would have also grasped the history of the universe in a short complexus [*in einem kurzen Inbegriff*].' (SW VIII, 207) How are we to take this statement, this affirmation of the necessary concatenation of biography and holography, of existence and cosmos? Does it not strike us as extravagant and fantastic, precisely the kind of *Schwärmerei* and flight of fancy for which thinkers affiliated with German romanticism are often criticised and which Hegel demolishes already in the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*? On the face of it we have here nothing but a restatement of the ancient Platonist theory of microcosm and macrocosm, to be found in all Platonist philosophising from the Hellenistic Neo-Platonism of Origen or Plotinus, over the Italian Renaissance Neo-Platonism of Ficino or Bruno, the Iranian Islamic Neo-Platonism of Ghazali or Suhrawardi up to the English Cambridge Platonism of More and Cudworth or the American Transcendentalism of Emerson, and moreover central doctrine of Platonising mystics like Gnostics, Hermeticists, Sufis or Kabbalists across the ages and across diverging traditions. Schelling's thought is related to this tradition but yet crucially different. Firstly, despite its undeniable debt to spiritual tradition, philosophy distinguishes itself from esoteric and mystical teaching by the fully exoteric nature of its discourse which implies the transparency of its progressions and assumptions and the tentative and principally contestable nature of all its results. In this precise sense Schelling's thought is as philosophical as possibly conceivable. Thus we find in Schelling not the simple assertion of the mystical doctrine of a visionary like a Swedenborg or a Sri Aurobindo, but on the contrary, we find a purely intra-philosophical grounding of the crucial theorem of the concatenation of cosmos and existence by way of the most profound and rigorous philosophical reflexion conducted on the highest level of methodological self-reflexion and critical and historical corroboration. Secondly, the absolute singularity of this articulation, differentiating it not only from mystical doctrine and the more esoterically inclined of the Platonist philosophers, but also from the entire philosophical tradition of Platonism tout court, is grounded in Schelling's position right at the centre of one of history's most productive geophilosophical constellation – that of post-Kantian German philosophy – and from the resulting conditioning of all of Schelling's efforts by the radical critique and transformation of philosophy that occurs in the Kantian and post-Kantian constellation.

Looking back at this decisive historical condition of his own philosophy, Schelling says in a lecture in 1842: ‘since over half a century, since Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, the German spirit has introduced a methodical investigation of the foundations of all knowledge, and the groundings of all human existence and life itself, since then it has fought a battle, which in equal duration, with equally changing scenes, and with such persisting fire, has never been fought before...’ (SW XIII 10) This battle for the foundations of knowledge and human existence is essentially a battle for the fate of metaphysics, and although Schelling embraces the Kantian critique of metaphysics and the concomitant collapse of the supporting structure of all classical cosmology, existential cosmology is itself an unapologetically metaphysical philosophy, much more so than the scepticism of contemporary thought is used to accommodate. Let us dwell on this point for a while. Although after a century of avidly anti-metaphysical sentiment – in which the very term metaphysics had temporarily sunk to the status of a generally recognised insult and was more readily associated with mediumistic practices than with philosophy – the penchant for metaphysics is clearly returning, it still remains somewhat suspect or at least in need of strong justification to philosophise in a metaphysical vein. But what is metaphysics? As a first and tentative characterisation we can say that it is the kind of thought which sees fundamental and decisive reality in ideas. As such it begins with Plato (and not with Aristotle whose hugely influential treatise is rather the first and most important among innumerable attempted systematic rearticulations of Platonic doctrine). As a discipline of thought, metaphysics is the pure science of ideas – a science in the sense of a Platonic ἐπιστήμη or a German Idealist *Wissenschaft*, that is, a coherent and interconnected system of knowledge. Unsurprisingly, the modern revolt against metaphysics has carried the name of the overturning of Platonism. This revolt is essentially a revolt against the predominance of ideas, whether driven by metaphysical scepticism and epistemic positivism from Hume to Carnap and Wittgenstein or by varieties of fundamental critique from Nietzsche to Heidegger and Derrida (two camps which until recently did fit neatly across the divide between so called analytic and continental philosophy). For the former metaphysics must be altogether abandoned while the task of philosophy becomes to act as a kind of corrective and therapeutic instance with regard to the positive sciences and to the extant forms of life. The latter on the other hand acknowledges the problematic vacancy in the structure of thought generated by the critique of metaphysics, and proffers a kind of thought in which a more basic and decisive layer of reality (life, time, difference) is supposed to do the work of the ideas without acceding to any systematic or global vision of reality as such. This line of thought remains in a strange suspense as it affirms the classical identity of philosophy

and metaphysics and thus avers the death of philosophy as necessary accompaniment to the critique of metaphysics, but yet continues to think philosophically in the wake of death. However, both anti-metaphysical strands in modern thought have entered into crises and have themselves been the object of overturning. In the analytical tradition, the early positivist reduction of philosophy to general heuristics has been overthrown by neo-metaphysical thinkers after Kripke and Lewis, instating a kind of renewed scholastic formal ontology, while in continental philosophy the theme of the end of philosophy has run its course in the quagmire of infinite deferrals and has given way to new and powerful metaphysical (and neo-Platonic) speculations in the systems of thinkers like Deleuze and Badiou, proving that the death knell had been sounded too early. What is and remains the most serious and substantial challenge to metaphysical thought is not its presumptive overturning but the persisting impact of Immanuel Kant's critique.

Kant's intervention is of such singular significance to merit division into an essentially and necessarily different pre-critical and post-critical metaphysics. To be sure, before Kant there had been a good many sceptics, from the Pyrrhonists to Hume, yet Kant's intervention differs from these critiques in that it does not reject metaphysics per se but rather seeks to correct and limit the excesses of a metaphysics which proceeds by way of intra-logical ratiocination alone, thus radically reforming the methodological and gnoseological foundation of metaphysics so that it can enter unto 'the secure path of science'. (AA B Introduction, *passim*) To do metaphysics after Kant necessarily means to reinvent it on the basis of the Kantian intervention – where the whole difficulty resides in the problem of having to do metaphysics, as the universal science of ideas, without reverting to the mode of thought destroyed by Kant. Contrary to later superficial or polemical readings, Kant himself invites and even demands such a reinvention. In Kant's self-understanding the critical philosophy functions precisely as a propaedeutic and prolegomena to a more capable future metaphysics which avoids the chief error of the previous hyperrationalist excesses of metaphysics: an unwarranted confidence in the self-sufficiency and the unlimited deductive power of reason. In the endeavour for the foundation of such a post-critical metaphysics, Schelling's primary antagonist is his erstwhile roommate at school, later friend and collaborator, and even later philosophical archrival G.W.F. Hegel.

During the collaborative years at Jena it seemed for a while as if the foundation of post-critical metaphysics would be an affair tackled jointly by Hegel and Schelling, who together

issued the *Kritisches Journal der Philosophie* as a launch pad for new speculations. But it rapidly becomes apparent that the approaches respectively developed by Hegel and Schelling are irreconcilably opposed, leading eventually to Hegel's break with Schelling in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* of 1807 and Schelling's subsequent turn to a much stronger and more pronounced articulation of his unique position and of his difference with Hegel in the mature phase of this work, beginning with the *Freedom Essay* of 1809. If the *Phenomenology* is a declaration of war against the aestheticism and the Romantic higher empiricism which Hegel sees expressed in intra-philosophical and systematic form in Schelling, Schelling's *Freedom Essay* is a declaration of war against what Schelling perceives as a circumvention of Kant's critique through a neo-classical return to rationalist metaphysics in Hegel's engulfment of existence in absolute reason. The *Science of Logic* of 1812-1816 and the *Ages of the World* of 1811-1815 must then be seen as the antagonistic attempts – one of them of the greatest systematic coherence and comprehensiveness, immensely successful for the author, the other cryptic, fragmentary and never published in the author's lifetime – to develop an adequate and comprehensive post-critical metaphysics based on the groundwork of the preceding break. Hegel, spoiled by recognition as the undisputed first philosopher of Germany, would subsequently treat Schelling in the manner which was to become the dominant mode of reading Schelling for the post-Hegelian and Marxian historiographies – as a precursor of intermediate importance whose early insights are all contained in a higher and more reasonable articulation in the Hegelian system.¹ Schelling on the other hand would take many years to reflect on the overwhelming power of the Hegelian system and would only return to present a highly sophisticated and carefully argued confrontation with Hegel and defence of his own version of the philosophy of the Absolute in the large body of the late lectures presented from 1828 up to 1844.

For a long time, the Hegelian perspective on this opposition has been predominant in official accounts of the history of philosophy – a perspective that is based on a polemical short-circuit of Schelling's position and that does not even read or acknowledge any of the mature Schellingian presentations of the confrontation, let alone treat the mature Schellingian philosophy (roughly from the *Freedom Essay* of 1809 onwards) as the kind of veritable counter-system to the Hegelian system, and alternative completion of German Idealism, that it

¹ This study will contribute to the ongoing project of recent Schelling scholarship to demonstrate that this interpretation of the history of philosophy, although historically influential, is indefensible.

actually is.² To be sure, the desire to treat Schelling's mature thought as a powerful and coherent (but not closed) system is made considerably more difficult by the enigmatic and dispersed nature of his extant oeuvre.³ Undergoing countless metamorphoses of style and strategy, the work of Schelling presents itself in a motley array consisting of systematic treatises, dialogues, articles and essays of various lengths, a literary novel, hefty and extensive fragments, aphorisms and poems, and a vast body of lectures which often tread the same territory with different coordinates and different objectives. Add to this the diversity of moods and general attitudes which colour Schelling's work in so many different shades: the exuberant enthusiasm of the adolescent prodigy whose teenage attempts at philosophising had won him unprecedented national fame, the playful hubris of the young favourite among the Jena romantics glorified by Goethe, the earnestness of the professor immersed in the study of nature and in direct exchange with the leading natural scientists of the day, the dread and sombre audacity of the grown man thrown into deep existential crisis exacerbated by the early death of his wife, and eventually the shrewdness and muted depth of the old man who has finally come to terms with life and the world and who presents the fruit of his life's labour with both irony and profundity. Unsurprisingly, a superficial survey of Schelling's works may overlook the fundamental continuity of all of Schelling's thought and the absolutely solid centre of all of Schelling's philosophising, and instead apprehend a mercurial thinker marked by inconsistency, particularly when compared to the arduousness and systematic thoroughness of Hegel. Hegel himself was acutely aware of the stark contrast between the two and it was Hegel's supreme qualities as a polemicist and a selective reader to which we owe the well-known image of Schelling as the Proteus of philosophy, the erratic genius whose muddled insights are preserved in a more sober form in the higher truth of the Hegelian system. Due to

² Symptomatic for this strategy, in the *History of Philosophy* Hegel only reads Schelling's works up to 1802, which are interpreted as minor developments of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*. As we will argue in the following, from the perspective of the major body of Schelling's philosophy, this interpretation is thoroughly deficient.

³ In the Anglosphere, the considerable problem of missing translations of the late work, including some of the most important texts of the late philosophy, is added – this study will translate and comment extensively from these works, at least partly remedying the lack of translations until the latter is actually overcome. Next to crucial lecture series such as *Initia Philosophiae Universae* or the *Erlangen Lectures*, Schelling's most extensive and perhaps most significant works, the *Philosophy of Mythology* and the *Philosophy of Revelation*, still remain untranslated.

the extraordinary success of this image, for over a century Schelling's work has predominantly been perceived as the stepping stone on the ladder from Kant to Hegel as which Hegelian and post-Hegelian (including Marxian) historiography depicted it.

Continental scholarship of the last decades has successfully challenged this reductive Hegelian reading of Schelling and has produced major studies, mostly in German but also increasingly in French, which document the coherence of Schelling's oeuvre and the power and contemporary attractiveness of Schelling's riposte against Hegel, while a new reception of Schelling is only just beginning to take shape in the Anglosphere (together with the missing translations, a large number of which are in the making). Contributing to this ongoing process of discovery, this study will present the distinctive Schellingian foundation of post-critical metaphysics as it emerges out of the Kantian problem horizon and the rearticulation of Platonic cosmology within this post-Kantian horizon, and will moreover demonstrate the groundedness of the Schellingian metaphysics in a critique and appropriation of Hegel by Schelling (for it is not just Hegel who claims to have appropriated and sublated the insights of the rival). What is most interesting and significant about the Schellingian critique of Hegel is that it is not merely a supplementary addition to Schelling's own project, but rather that the mature Schellingian project of existential cosmology is only really unfolded and explicated once Schelling has gone through the critique of Hegel (implicitly in the *Freedom Essay* of 1809 and the *Ages of the World* of 1811-1815, and explicitly in the late lectures from 1821 onwards) which is why our study will begin by a reconstruction of the confrontation between Schelling and Hegel on the basis of the Kantian critique of metaphysics, and will only then – once the ground has been sufficiently constructed – enter into a presentation of the metaphysics of existential cosmology. As we will demonstrate, Schelling's existential cosmology is entirely grounded on Kantian critique. Indeed the late Schelling even continues and intensifies Kant's critique of rationalist metaphysics, now against what Schelling sees as a novel rearticulation of the latter in the system of Hegel. But of course Hegel does not simply revert to dogmatic rationalism. Hegel too is entirely convinced that Kant has once and for all destroyed that 'naïve method, which, still without the consciousness of opposition of thought in and against itself, contains the faith that through *thinking* the *truth is cognised*, that, which the objects really are, brought in front of consciousness'. (HW *Enc.* § 26, VIII 93)

Hegel's whole genius consists precisely in elevating pure reason into a higher mode of being in which it leaves behind the stability of classical reason. The gist of Schelling's critique of

Hegel however, is that, as Kant demonstrated, the actually existing world or universe can not be deduced by reason – not even by the superior reason of Hegelian dialectics. The critical aspect of Schelling's thought thus functions as a second critique of pure reason which can well be understood as a critique of cosmic reason: a critique of the kind of reason which attempts to logically deduce the cosmos. But Schelling neither returns to the cosmic agnosticism of Kant, in which we can never make more than hypothetical and negative assertions about the world as a whole, nor accedes to the acosmism of 20th century anti-metaphysical thought in which the universe is not an object of philosophical thought any longer at all since it is not an object of positive empirical experience (for positivism) or since it transcends the givenness of the finite human life-world (for Heideggerianism). On the contrary, Schelling's central project precisely aims at articulating a holographic cosmology – holographic in the sense of thinking the cosmos as an integrated reality – which however is no longer grounded on logical deduction but on a genuinely post-critical metaphysics of the extra-logical and non-rational facticity of existence. This feat is made possible by Schelling in a movement of thought which this thesis seeks to recuperate as central and foundational for metaphysics: through a reasoned proof for the ontological and metaphysical limits of reason, or through what we will recognise as an ontological proof of chaos which emerges from a radicalisation of the ontological proof of God. The second half of this study reconstructs Schelling's resultant metaphysics as based on the ontological proof of chaos, as a rearticulation of Platonic cosmology on the basis of, and in the conceptual framework of the critical operation of thought conducted in response to Kant and Hegel. Taken together, the two parts of this study present a historical and systematic rearticulation of existential cosmology. Given our commitment to a philosophical history of philosophy as an active and always contemporary re-enactment of trans-temporal truth in new historical and temporal contexts, such a reconstruction will by necessity go beyond an archival and antiquarian interest in the thought of bygone thinkers. Rather, the rearticulation of Schelling's existential cosmology that this thesis will present, is to be understood as the attempt to support in a contemporary context the thought of a holographic cosmology founded on a fundamental metaphysics which is based on a reasoned, ontological proof of chaos. While the figure of thought of ontological chaos plays a decisive role in the resurgence of metaphysical thinking from Deleuze to Badiou and Meillassoux (under the names of chaos, inconsistency or hyper-chaos), we will show that in Schelling – by way of the critique of Hegel – we can find a different and powerful grounding for metaphysics which unlike particularly the Badiouian and Meillassouxian strand of thought, allows for the thinking of an integrated cosmic reality

despite the logical and ontological necessity of chaos. We have labelled this ability to think the cosmos as an integrated reality as a holographic thinking – the condition for any truly cosmological thought, exemplified in the Western tradition by thinkers like Plotinus, Ficino, Bruno, Bergson or Whitehead. While Schelling's existential cosmology belongs entirely in this tradition, the fundamental metaphysics that we find in Schelling is made unique and exceptionally potent through its grounding on the ontological proof of chaos, a radicalised form of the ontological proof of God. That, following Schelling, fundamental metaphysics should derive from this figure of thought is a mark of continuity with the whole classical tradition of metaphysics, which is essentially a thought that emerges from the ontological proof of God.⁴ Insofar however, that the ontological proof which we shall recover with Schelling in this study as the grounding of fundamental metaphysics, is a proof of chaos rather than a proof of cosmos, there is also a clear critical and existential break with the hyperlogical tradition of metaphysics and an alternative opening of what we call a translogical metaphysics – a post-critically rearticulated Platonic metaphysics in which the logical grasping of the universe is completed by the extra-logical vision of ideas or archetypes as ordering structures of the cosmos emergent from chaos. As opposed to intra- or hyperlogical metaphysics in which everything is deduced through reasoning alone, translogical metaphysics hence also essentially has a superior empiricist aspect which concerns the envisioning of facticity and non-deducible reality. As we shall see in the unfolding of this study, in Schelling's existential cosmology, the ontological proof of chaos is hence integrated into a metaphysical empiricism in which the parameters of cosmogenesis and ideal cosmography are laid out.

⁴ On the ontological proof of God as foundational figure of thought in classical metaphysics, see Dieter Henrich's *Der ontologische Gottesbeweis* (Henrich 1960). In recent philosophy sophisticated attempts have been made by Quentin Meillassoux in *Après La Finitude* (Meillassoux 2006) and Gunnar Hindrichs in *Das Absolute und das Subjekt* (Hindrichs 2008) to rethink and rearticulate the ontological proof as a foundation for a post-metaphysical philosophy of the absolute. The ontological proof of chaos that will be reconstructed in this thesis will be shown to offer an alternative foundation for a metaphysics that has the broad horizon of a holographic and cosmological philosophy.

Part 1 : Critique of Cosmic Reason

‘So even God must be given up by the one who wants to posit himself into the point of beginning of the truly free philosophy. Here it is said: who wants to gain it, will lose it, and who gives it up, will find it. Only the one has gotten to the ground of himself and has realised the whole depth of life, who has once left all, and has himself been left by all, for whom all vanished, and who has seen himself alone with the infinite: a great step, which Plato compares to death. What Dante had written above the gates of Inferno, is in a different sense also to be written above the gates of philosophy: “let all hope vanish, ye who enter.” Who truly wants to philosophise must want nothing, know nothing, feel utterly bare and poor, give all away, to win everything.’

(SW IX 217-218)

F.W.J. Schelling, *Erlangen Lectures*, 1821

Schelling's existential cosmology is a post-critical cosmology. That is to say that in contradistinction to the classical (essentially Neoplatonic-Aristotelian) cosmology that discerns general patterns of order in the cosmic edifice and contemplates the harmonious whole in the purposefulness of its divine distributions, the Schellingian cosmology is grounded on a profound crisis, namely the crisis of what we call cosmic reason, the reason that seeks to deduce the general structures of a divinely organised universe out of its own capacities. It is the crisis of this reason which has become effective in Kant, who by contemporaries like Moses Mendelsohn was called *der Alleszermalmer* (the all-destroyer), precisely because of the shattering of all cosmological and theological stability of rational deduction of cosmos and God through his work. But while Kant reinstates reason as deontological imperative capable of practically reintegrating the shattered cosmos, and only hints in passing – as if frightened of the consequences: the monstrosity of a divine order whose being is not known but demanded – at the abysmal ground or unground on which this infinite demand rests, Schelling sees Kant's epochal importance in having positively demonstrated the dependence of reason on an other of reason, its outside, or unreason. Who wants to think reason after Kant must first think unreason, who wants to think God must first think the 'Ungod' [*der Ungott*] (SW XII 166, SW XIII 639). Thus in the lectures on the *Grounding of Positive Philosophy* Schelling asks with view to his general project:

‘Why is there reason, why is not unreason? To be sure, at first glance it is convenient to posit reason as universal substance, as necessary being. But in fact the existence of reason is itself only something conditioned, positive. For why should the opposite, taken absolutely, not just as well be able to be?’ (PP 296)

But for Schelling this question is not a question of despair. We advance the thesis that all of Schelling’s thought, variously labelled by himself as Philosophy of Nature, Philosophy of Art or Philosophy of Mythology can be grasped as the attempt to articulate the cosmology of a trans-rational Absolute beyond or despite the destruction of self-sufficient cosmic reason in the the Kantian critique.⁵ The crux of this paradoxical endeavour (given that classical metaphysics is by nature a thought of pure reason) lies in the insight that a superior empiricist apprehension of the facticity and sheer thatness of existence, and of the genesis of reason from within the flow of life and out of the primal ungodly or pre-godly powers of nature, can form an alternative grounding for a holographic or cosmological thought that would function like metaphysics as a total thought of reality without negating or neglecting the facticity of reason as emergent from within a process of non-reason. If Schelling’s Philosophy of Nature seeks to grasp the natural process as it unfolds before and as ground of the genesis of reflexion, consciousness and conceptual thought, the Philosophy of Art expands the purview unto the genesis of the universal symbolic coordinates of sense out of the natural process which in turn figure as the material or stuff of artistic creation, the Philosophy of Mythology eventually seeks to grasp the historical emergence of human consciousness as unconscious

⁵ Against a common misunderstanding it is important to point out that Schelling’s Philosophy of Nature, Philosophy of Art and Philosophy of Mythology are not cases of a ‘philosophy of x’ which just consists in an abstract theoretical investigation of a particular domain of reality. Perspicaciously and sarcastically, Schelling already warns against such an ‘abuse of the term philosophy’, now ubiquitous especially in circles of so-called analytical philosophy, in the *Philosophy of Art* of 1802-1803: ‘We already have a philosophy, and even a doctrine of science [*eine Wissenschaftslehre*] of agriculture, it can be expected that a philosophy of chariots will also be established, and eventually there will be as many philosophies as there are objects at all, and amongst the many philosophies philosophy itself will be entirely lost.’ (V 365) The Schellingian Philosophy of Nature, the Philosophy of Art and the Philosophy of Mythology are essentially one and the same existential cosmology, only that they variously view the Absolute *as* nature, art or mythology.

natural process in which the universe of sense has factually emerged in human civilization.⁶ Hence, in the late lectures on the Philosophy of Mythology Schelling can say that ‘the philosophy of mythology is philosophy of nature, not by intention but objectively [*der Sache nach*] – in a higher sphere.’ (XII 258) This is why in Schelling’s *Philosophy of Art* the ideas – as highest symbolic forms – are equivalent to the mythological gods, see *Philosophy of Art* § 28 (SW V 390), or also the *Bruno* of 1802 according to which the ‘ideas of things’ are to be understood as ‘immortal gods.’ (SW IV 262) The grounding for the emergence of the symbolic Absolute of art and mythology is in turn given in the unconscious pre-history of spirit of the Philosophy of Nature – a work like the *System of Transcendental Idealism* of 1800 precisely seeks to reconstruct the ‘progressive history of self-consciousness’ as a product of primal unconscious actions in nature.⁷ (SW III 331) This archaeological or radically historical perspective opens up the vista of a cosmology that does not set out from the presupposition of divine order but anticipates its possible emergence in the course of cosmic history.

As dealing with the most far-reaching perspective unto the genesis of reason and a meaningfully ordered world, the Philosophy of Mythology contains Schelling’s most

⁶ Among recent commentators Grant’s *Philosophies of Nature after Schelling* (Grant 2008) has been extraordinarily successful in presenting the foundational function of *Naturphilosophie* for the Schellingian philosophy.

⁷ Later developments along the line of Schelling’s superior physics of art and mythology have been rather sparse. Apart from the seminal work of Deleuze and Guattari (in focussed studies of art and more dispersed treatments of mythology, particularly in *A Thousand Plateaus*), one of the most significant among these has been the work of Eric Alliez, who setting out from a post-Schellingian nature-philosophical aperture in *De l’impossibilité de la phénoménologie* (Alliez 1995) develops a sustained superior empiricist investigation of modern art, from the history of painting in *La Pensée-Matisse* (Alliez 2005) and *L’Œil-Cerveau* (Alliez 2007) to contemporary installation in a forthcoming book, entitled *Défaire l’image, De l’art contemporain*. The symbol-theoretic and nature-philosophical study of mythology has been partially developed by Jung and post-Jungian scholars like Joseph Campbell and Maria-Louise von Franz. In this regard the Deleuzian assertion that ‘Jung is in any event profounder than Freud’ (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, p. 241) is entirely accordant with Schelling’s conception of the unconscious past of spirit as constituted by a vortex of pre-rational but symbolic natural powers.

extensive engagement with the Kantian critique of cosmic reason. The former essentially attempts to do historically and archaeologically what the latter does systematically and epistemologically. While the *Critique of Pure Reason* demonstrates the limits of a reason that purports to know or deduce the structure of cosmic existence solely out of its own operations by proving the entanglement of such a reason in illusory and indefensible claims, the *Philosophy of Mythology* focusses not on the systematic limitations but the historical limitations of reason, and thus archaeologically corroborates Schelling's general thesis of the extra-reflexive or translogical ground of existence and the boundedness and conditionedness of intra-reflexive reason.⁸ As such, Schelling's efforts stand at the very centre of the Romantic *Rationalitätskritik* and its valorisation of mythology, which already heralded by the more perspicacious of the late Enlightenment thinkers such as Lessing and Herder (and their important appropriation of Vico), critically takes into view the vacant axiological grounding of the self-sufficient analytical or mechanical reason of modernity firmly established by Galilei, Descartes and Newton.⁹ Schelling and other Romantics like Schiller, Hölderlin,

⁸ It is in this sense that in *the Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* of 1797 the teenage Schelling already speaks of pure reflexion as a 'mental disease of the human'. (SW II 13) The strategy followed in Schelling's archaeology of consciousness is very different, in fact radically opposed, to the one pursued by Hegel in his lectures on the *Philosophy of Religion* and the *Philosophy of History*. Where Hegel reads the mythologies as primitive stages of a spirit which has not yet found its richest expression in concrete universality, and hence still dwells in the abstract one-sidedness of entirely being unity in substance (as in China) or multiplicity in substance (as in India) or in the pre-forms of merely symbolic and not yet conceptual individuality (as in Egypt), Schelling treats the whole of the mythological process as the plastic expression of a vortex of theogonic and cosmogonic natural power which precedes and grounds reason but is in no way a primitive or undeveloped form of reason but rather the irreducible ground of reason.

⁹ Once again, Kant stands as the philosophical aperture of the depth-critique of modern or analytical rationality, here especially in its revealing of necessary synthetic *ideas* as axiological legitimation of practical activity in the *Transcendental Doctrine of Method* of the first Critique, and the *Critique of Practical Reason*, as well as the establishment of the necessity of the heuristic assumption of organic or teleological principles beyond mechanical laws in the organisation of life or the organism in the *Critique of Judgment*. We rely on this point as well as in our general assessment of the Romantic critique of rationality on the

Schlegel and Novalis, propose a fundamental correction (and not an abolition, unlike later irrationalists like Klages or Spengler) of the general movement of Western Enlightenment and of all its sociopolitical effectivity from the *philosophes* of the *lumière* to the *terreur* of Thermidor. The tenor of the Romantic critique echoed from Hölderlin's *Hyperion* to Novalis' *Europa* is based on the observation that with the concurrent collapse of the well-ordered ancient cosmos and the loss of the stabilising function of the divinities of mythology and religion as legitimising powers of the cosmos, the rationalised and secularised acosmic society of modernity fatally lacks the symbolic resources that are necessary to integrate a 'society' of atomised rational agents into a horizon of sense and purpose.¹⁰ As already in the so-called *Oldest System Program of German Idealism* of 1794 – a manifesto jointly written by Schelling, Hölderlin and Hegel – the Romantic opposition to this machinery of rationality (later authoritatively analysed by Max Weber) is precisely directed against its atomising and automatising nature, its independence from higher ideas as principles of organic or purposeful organisation, to be remedied by a new universal aesthetisation, mythologisation and spiritualisation of the cosmos as condition of human liberation.¹¹ The *Oldest System Program* condenses this call, equally to be heard in works like Schlegel's *Speech on Mythology* of

seminal studies of Manfred Frank, presented in works like *Der kommende Gott* and *Mythendämmerung*.

¹⁰ In this sense, Schelling writes in the *System of Transcendental Idealism* of 1800 that modern society 'is like a machine that has been prearranged for certain cases, and which acts by itself, i.e. entirely blindly, as soon as these cases are given; and although this machine has been built and arranged by human hand, it must, as soon as the artist takes his hands off, continue to act, like visible nature, independently and according to its own laws.' (SW III 583)

¹¹ We see that a work like Horkheimer's and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* stands clearly in the tradition of the Romantic critique although the historical conjuncture of advanced industrialised capitalism and genocidal totalitarianism, as well as the hostile appropriation of the programme of a new mythology by thinkers of the far right from Klages and Spengler to Rosenthal may have led the authors to the abandoning of the hope for an overcoming of the predicament of the Iron Cage through a new mythology of liberation, and the discernment of an aporetic or 'negative dialectical' impasse. (see Adorno and Horkheimer 2011) Although we do not share Horkheimer's and Adorno's pessimism, the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* remains seminal precisely in its capacity to highlight the dangers of a problematic complicity of mythos and domination.

1800, in the demand for a New Mythology, which unlike the ancient mythologies must no longer be pre- or irrational but a translogical ‘mythology of reason’ which ‘stands in the service of ideas’. [quoted from Frank (1975), 25-32]

Now, the singularity of Schelling’s thought in the midst of this larger Romantic project lies in having gone beyond affective affirmation and to have attempted (in this capacity rather being a German Idealist, akin to Fichte’s and Hegel’s foundational and systematising thought), as the only Romantic thinker, the systematic articulation of a new metaphysics as foundation on which to refound the new mythology. It is this new post-critical metaphysics which we call existential cosmology. The central question for existential cosmology is how to warrant the emergence of a universe of sense without the possibility of an a priori deduction of God. In targeting the problematic concatenation of sense and divinity, Schelling thus confronts – on the basis of the Kantian critique – a foundational problem of philosophy which had been left largely unexamined since its first ambivalent articulation by Plato and one-sided resolution by Aristotle, and had (notwithstanding Vico’s exceptional investigations) certainly not been the object of the kind of intensive reflexion and meticulous investigation to which Schelling submits it: the interdependence of λόγος and μῦθος. A central issue within this complex problematic is the problem of Plato’s *Kratylos*, (one of the first dialogues, if not the first, to introduce the doctrine of ideas – as we have stated earlier, the core of all metaphysics) that is, the problem of the relation of words or concepts to things, (of ὀνόματα to ὄντα) and of the dependence of this relation on primal psychophysical forces which express themselves, as it were, in the names that denote the things thus composed, whereby the name stands in direct relation of vocal imitation to the thing. (Οὐκοῦν καὶ τὸ ὄνομα ὁμολογεῖς μίμημά τι εἶναι τοῦ πράγματος; *Kra.* 430b) Contrary to Plato’s later partial rejection of mythology in *Politeia* (despite the establishment of new myths like those of the Cave and of Er) in the *Kratylos* Plato advises us to learn from Homer ‘and the other poets’ (*Kra.*, 391c-d) if we want to discern the primal forces on which the stability of names, and eventually even the stability of the ideas itself, depends.¹²

¹² In fact many, if not most, of the names that in the dialogue Socrates goes on to reconstruct in the following series of etymologies depend on Homer and Hesiod – implying that in a certain sense (and although Plato explicitly rejects the pseudo-explanation of a deus ex machina, *Kra.* 425d) it is the being of the deities of mythology which grants the names and concepts a symbolic stability.

Intensifying this Platonic posture, Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology conducts a thorough investigation of various global mythologies demonstrating 'the great and undeniable fact of the internal relatedness of the mythologies of the most different and otherwise unsimilar peoples' (XI 61) and revealing the universal process of natural powers at work in the symbolic genesis of the mythologies, resulting in what Schelling calls the theogonic process in which the 'God-positing consciousness' [*das Gottsetzende Bewußtsein*] (SW XII 259 ff) immanently produces its pantheistic unity, its polytheistic deities, demons and divinities, and eventually its conception of the monotheistic God, which in turn figure as the symbolic coordinates on which reason and the concepts of reason are grounded.¹³ Lacking the possibility of an a priori deduction of God as stabilising power of the cosmos, Schelling's archaeological or metaphysical empiricist perspective instead focusses on the factual emergence of the collective consciousness of the divine in history, up to the crisis of Western rational consciousness in modernity and its 'desperation of an absolute nihilism' (SW XIII 405) as last point of transition to the genesis of a new trans-rational 'universal mythology' (SW V 562) founded on the post-critical metaphysics of existential cosmology. But if there is no already given, already deduced and secure, God who can function as the ground of a holographic universe of sense, then only the lack or absence of this cosmic ordering principle, taken itself positively as a factual principle of metaphysical disorder, can provide a ground or rather an unground for the universal process in which sense can historically emerge. Schelling captures this principle of cosmic disorder through the speculative concept of chaos – the philosophical or metaphysical Ungod.

The chaos figures prominently as primal vortex of powers in the Philosophy of Nature such as in writings like the *Bruno* of 1802 where Schelling speaks of 'the highest unity which we view as the holy abyss [*den heiligen Abgrund*] from which all emerges and into which all

¹³ Once again the work of Horkheimer and Adorno stands in the Romantic tradition, and here more specifically in a Schellingian, tradition in its investigation of mythology and metaphysics, albeit without reference to Schelling's pioneering *Philosophy of Mythology*, which however remained largely unknown or condemned as politically unacceptable in the political climate of the 20th century – let us remember that in the German original, the subtitle of Lukacs' critique of irrationalism is 'from Schelling to Hitler' – *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft – der Weg des Irrationalismus von Schelling zu Hitler* (Lukacs, 1988). This only changed in the late 1950's with the works of Habermas and Schulz, when the first extensive reception of Schelling began.

returns' (SW IV 258), the *Fernere Darstellungen* of 1802 in which 'the chaos lies in infinity and absoluteness of form' (SW IV 446) to the *Würzburg System* of 1804 in which 'the chaos of all things is inborn in the universe, carries the fruits and outgrowths of the whole cosmos [*des ganzen All*]' (SW VI 473). In the Philosophy of Art, Schelling consequently insists that 'the understanding passes to all cognition of the absolute, be it in art or in science, through intuition of the chaos.' (SW V 466) And eventually in the Philosophy of Mythology chaos does not only figure as the 'primal power [*die Urpotenz*] of all mythology', the 'source and the unity of the whole world of gods' and the '*Götterabgrund*' (the abyss of gods) but is also the 'highest concept' through which the 'explanation of the whole of mythology' proceeds. (SW XII 604, 596) But as Schelling insists, chaos is not itself a mythological concept in the sense that it was not experienced in the genetic process of collective consciousness such as the mythological gods and demi-gods. (SW XII 592) In extension it is absolutely correct to say that the chaos – the productive cosmic principle of disorder – is neither to be empirically experienced in nature nor in art or any of the other productions of human spirit. Rather, chaos is a purely speculative concept – indeed it is the central concept of Schelling's post-critical and translogical metaphysics.

But chaos is not a new philosophical concept. On the contrary, in his archaeology of consciousness in the Philosophy of Mythology, which also contains also the outlines of an archaeology of philosophy, Schelling stresses that the speculative concept of chaos is 'the first impulse of an abstract thinking subtracting itself from the mythological, the first impulse of a free philosophy', or the historically very first concept of philosophy. (SW XI 46). Despite its position at the outset of ancient Greek mythology, the concept of chaos did not emerge at the beginning of the consciousness-generating process but at its very end at which an awakened philosophical consciousness – now fully positioned in reason and language – confronts the experience of its own facticity and attempts to grasp the unground from which it emerged.¹⁴

¹⁴ Thus Schelling makes the extravagant claim that Hesiod is in fact the first Western philosopher, whose *Theogony* is not the first work of mythology but the last synthesis of mythology and the first work of a philosophy which is stepping out of the mythological process by the introduction of speculative concepts like the chaos. (SW XII 592) This claim is based on Schelling's argument that it is just as absurd to think that the mythologies were the inventions of individual human beings as it is to think that the languages were invented by single human beings. Both language and mythology must be thought to have developed in a long process which for the most part is mute and lost in the distant past, which is also why at

(SW XI 46) The concept of chaos stands at the end of mythology and the beginning of philosophy. But while experience of chaos is still vivid and alive in the early Ionian philosophy – the first attempt to metaphysically grasp the natural vortex of powers, as Χάος, ἄπειρον, φύσις, in Anaxagoras, Anaximander, Empedocles – the first and most powerful rationalisation of the facticity of chaos takes places in Parmenides and the Eleatic unconditional identification of being and thought, or of being and what can be said and thought of being, as precondition of all knowledge.¹⁵ We have tentatively determined metaphysics as the science of ideas, originating as fully articulated and historically effective doctrine, in Plato. Now we can expand this definition, in the case of classical or rationalist metaphysics, by the Parmenidean identification of thought and being through which metaphysical reason makes a step away from dependence on the mythological universe and attempts to conquer the means to think the conceptual determination of the world out of its own logical necessity and independently of the contingent powers of nature, their mythological presentations as deities, or their speculative comprehension as chaos. Cosmic reason is the product of this Parmenidean step into the pure necessity of thought which is at once the pure necessity of being. As important as Parmenides' focus on the internal and logical consistency of thought and the opposition to the one-sidedly physical Ionian philosophy is for the intra-rational progress of thought (and Plato would not have been

the time when Homer and Hesiod articulate their synoptic presentations, the content of the mythology is an actually lived and experienced one, in the sense that collective human consciousness has actually proceeded through the various stages which in mythology appear as phases of the battle of gods. Responding to the problem of the *Kratylos* in a decisive manner, Schelling not only affirms the concatenation of the mythological process and the genesis of language, but even argues for the primacy of the former in the mutual process, as it is the plastic expressivity of mythology which provides a symbolic stabilisation for language and which invests the richness of an experienced symbolic reality into the etymological past of language: 'One is almost tempted to say: language itself is only the waned mythology, that it preserves in abstract and formal differences in it that which mythology contains in living and concrete differences.' (SW XI 52)

¹⁵ See Parmenides' poem, where the Way of Truth is introduced as the necessary being of what is and the non-being of what is not (2.3-2.7.) and the identity of being thought and being (3), while what is not cannot be said or thought (8.8) as it is unthinkable and unnamable (8.16). This Parmenidean move is in turn made possible by Pythagoras' discovery of apodictic logical evidence based on the metaphysical articulation of mathematical certainty.

possible without Parmenides) for Schelling the step into pure reflexion under exclusion and suppression of the chaos is nonetheless the congenital defect of hyperrationalist Western philosophy passed on from Parmenides over the whole of classical metaphysics up to Hegel's superior rationalism. Its product is already in the Eleatics a mere '*Scheinwissen*', (SW XIII 97-98) an illusory knowledge gained by vertiginous circles in the ether of thought, which the critical dialectics of Socrates intended to destroy and debunk, a gesture which Schelling must successfully repeat with regards to Hegel's reintegration of Kant's shattered cosmos in a superior reason, if the foundation of post-critical metaphysics as translogical and existential cosmology is supposed to succeed.

At this point we might already ask ourselves how Schelling's critical stance is compatible with his own early system outlines such as the *Darstellung* of 1800, the *Fernere Darstellungen* of 1802 or the *System of the Whole of Philosophy* (Würzburg System) of 1804, in which Schelling seems to produce rational constructions of the world-system, and which moreover – at least in the case of the first of these texts – Hegel himself cites in the *History of Philosophy* as (primitive) forerunners to his own system of absolute reason. (HW XX 420ff.) But as Schelling insists later, these early attempts deploy a hypothetical or transcendental structure and do not purport to deduce existence out of thought.¹⁶ (e.g. in SW XIII 59) Once Schelling turns to the articulation of a philosophy of existence and historical emergence, especially in the *Freedom Essay* of 1809 and the *Ages of the World* project of 1811 onwards, both expressive means and epistemic posture markedly shift and attain the proper register of existential cosmology, without giving up any of the ontological foundations laid in the early work (it will be one important task of this study, based on the working hypothesis of the

¹⁶ This is precisely why the Absolute is a presupposition in works like the *Darstellung* or the *Würzburg System*. What Hegel criticises as the immediate claim to the Absolute like 'shot out of the pistol' in the *Preface* to the *Phenomenology* (HW III 31) and then again in the *Introduction* to the *Science of Logic* (HW VI 65) is in fact categorically distinct from what Hegel here understands as Absolute, since it is a purely negative supposition of hypothetical structure (the world must be such and such *if* there is a world) and does not make any positive claims about how the existing world factually is purely out of 'inner revelation, faith, intellectual intuition, etc.' (HW VI 65). See also Manfred Frank's *Der Unendliche Mangel an Sein* (Frank 2008) which meticulously defends Schelling's early philosophy from Hegel's attacks in the *Phenomenology*, and mounts a counterattack on Hegel's *Logic* from the Schellingian vantage point.

integral unity of the entire Schellingian oeuvre, to demonstrate how exactly this continuity is possible). The existential works, beginning with the *Freedom Essay*, already contain an implicit critique of Hegel's rationalist deduction of existence, only rendered explicit and argued with rigour in the vast body of late lectures which Schelling delivers in Erlangen, Munich and Berlin in the years between 1828 and 1844. But here in the late lectures, particularly in the *Grounding of Positive Philosophy* of 1832/1833 delivered in Munich, and in the Berlin lectures of the 1840ies, we find not only a critique of Hegel's rival conception of the Absolute, but also the most sophisticated methodological self-reflexion of Schellingian philosophy which retrospectively invests the early and the middle phase of Schelling's philosophy with systematic coherence as integral elements of a post-critical metaphysics.¹⁷ Thus the engagement with Hegel can be seen as the catalyst which elevates Schelling's existential cosmology to its highest and most potent form. What is essentially at stake in this dispute is the legacy of the Kantian critique.

Thus the birth of existential cosmology takes place out of the nexus Kant-Hegel-Schelling. Our first investigation – in Part I of this study – will hence proceed through the illumination of the following three steps: 1) Kant's critique of rationalist metaphysics, 2) Hegel's sublation of Kant's critique into a superior rationalism, 3) Schelling's superior critique of Hegel's superior rationalism and alternative foundation of post-critical metaphysics. Through the reconstruction of this nexus we will be able to gain a formidable entry into the critique of cosmic reason and work our way through the conflict between Schelling and Hegel in order to discern the foundational structure of existential cosmology as well as its basic gnoseological position – which Schelling himself calls metaphysical empiricism – before then, in Part II of this study, we can begin with the systematic reconstruction of existential cosmology on the basis of this foundation.

¹⁷ Generally the late philosophy is known as the positive philosophy, however this designation is not entirely correct as the late philosophy still considers negative or pure-rational thought an integral part of philosophy. This is also why the interpretation according to which Schelling's late project is essentially different to his early and middle philosophy, is not defensible. On the contrary, the whole point of the late philosophy is to integrate a negative or purely rational thought of essences – as in the early system outlines – into the larger positive cosmology of the kind which was produced in the *Ages of the World*. Read from the vantage point of the late lectures the integral unity of Schelling's work is clear and convincingly articulated.

Kant's Destruction of the Ontological Proof of God

The Kantian *Critique of Pure Reason* can be understood as a Socratic critique of modern rationalist metaphysics and its general ontology still sustained by Parmenidean identity. We enter into the Transcendental Dialectic, the deathbed and last resting-place of classical metaphysics, as it is Kant's shattering of the identity of being and thought, or of concept and existence, which figures as the condition for Schelling's renewed anti-Parmenidean and anti-Hegelian foundational posture. Kant's general intention can be well grasped as the attempt to rethink the Platonic doctrine of ideas, freed from the assumption of the absolute Parmenidean identity of thought and being, and hence to 'understand him [Plato] better than he understood himself' (AA A314, B370) by rearticulating the science of ideas as an endeavour purely immanent to the operations of spirit, for which ideas are guides and horizons to be progressively approximated in a universal process of discovery, but no longer substantial and primal realities of being accessible to pure thought.¹⁸ We will reconstruct the core of this

¹⁸ To be sure, Plato's own position is far more sophisticated than the dove analogy by which Kant criticises the Platonic doctrine of ideas: 'The light dove, by parting the air in free flight, in feeling the resistance, could imagine that in the airless space it could succeed much better. Similarly Plato left the world of senses because it set so narrow boundaries to the understanding and dared, on the wings of ideas, beyond it and into the empty space of pure understanding.' (AA A5/B9) The ironic genius of Plato shows itself in the way the dialogue *Parmenides* lets precisely Parmenides, the originator of the identity of thought and being, dissect and destroy the naïve doctrine of ideas which would see the immediate and absolute reality of being in the ideas (which even in *Phaedo* has chiefly a pedagogical function), concluding with a marked aporetic of what Kant would call a constitutive idea (Par. 133a, 134b-c). The anti-Parmenidean solution of the *Sophistes* to grasp the idea as meontic nothingness (Sop. 246a-251a) already entirely evades Kant's critique of Plato and offers a most potent way into the doctrine of ideas even and especially after Kant, which is why Schelling refers to the *Sophistes* as 'the true initiation to the higher science'. (SW XI 393) Paradoxically, Plato himself may have already thought beyond some of the shortcomings of classical metaphysics before it was even properly constituted. For Kant's partial defence we must however note that unlike Hegel and Schelling, Kant had only very little solid grounding in the history of philosophy – in fact Schelling and Hegel are the first philosophers in the

operation carefully in order to generate the conceptual ground on which we can then stage the dispute between Hegel and Schelling. In the Kantian formulation, the ideas are the way in which any given content of experience is viewed ‘as determined through an absolute totality of determinations’ and the possible ways in which this can happen are ‘not arbitrarily fabricated, but dictated by the nature of reason itself.’ (AA A327 B384) The three ‘classes’ under which the ideas fall, are identical to the classical three objects of scholastic and neo-scholastic metaphysics: 1. The soul 2. the world, and 3. God, or ‘first the absolute (unconditioned) unity of the thinking subject, the second the absolute unity of the series of conditions of appearance, the third the absolute unity of the condition of all objects of thought at all.’ (AA A334, B391)

In the *Schulmetaphysik* of Wolff and Baumgarten each one of these three totalities is dealt with by one branch of *metaphysica specialis*: psychology, cosmology and theology, while all three are subordinated to the higher order *metaphysica generalis* which is ontology or the general doctrine of being.¹⁹ The three sections of the Transcendental Dialectic are each devoted to the destruction of one branch of special metaphysics. The section on Paralogism demonstrates the error which founds rational psychology as dogmatic assertion of immutable qualities of the soul, the section on the Antinomy of Reason demonstrates the entanglement of rational cosmology in self-contradictory claims, and the section on the Ideal of Reason disproves the three proofs of God of rational theology: the ontological, cosmological and the

Western tradition to understand the mastering of the history of philosophy as requisite for doing philosophy systematically.

¹⁹ It is interesting to note that the modern taxonomy, which is still essentially in use today, is literally invented by Wolff (although Suarez deploys a similar scheme) who is hardly read at all today despite being the originator of the modern division of philosophical sub-disciplines. Kant himself read Wolff and Baumgarten intensively and carefully and constructed most, if not all, of his own concepts out of a critical appropriation of these thinkers. Kant also reflects repeatedly on the architectonic of metaphysics and rewrites it a number of times, once again corroborating the claim that Kant does not seek to abandon but to reform metaphysics. Most markedly, see the notes to Baumgarten’s metaphysics, *Reflexions on Metaphysics, phase v–φ*, where Kant identifies the critique of pure reason with *metaphysica generalis* and each of the three branches of rational metaphysics, expanded by rational physics (a subgroup of rational physiology, together with rational psychology) each with one branch of *metaphysica specialis*. (AA XVIII 9)

physicotheological proof. From among these different sections of the Transcendental Dialectic, Schelling is convinced that the 'genetic interconnection' between the Kantian critique and the succeeding systems, as well as the 'determinate point, to which later development connects as a necessary consequence, is to be found in Kant's doctrine of the ideal of reason.' (SW XI 283) This is a non-obvious claim which needs to be investigated.

The whole of the Transcendental Dialectic discerns with critical rigour the different ways in which metaphysical concepts that purport to determine the ultimate reality of the world, if deduced from ratiocination and necessary logical conclusion alone, are nothing but *conceptus ratiocinantes* which make illusory claims to a knowledge they do not possess. (AA A311/B368) Certainly it would seem as if the antinomy of pure reason is the privileged candidate for delivering the lethal blow to the *Scheinwissen* of cosmic reason, as it demonstrates that the classical metaphysical assertions about the general nature of the world, if taken as general and unequivocal truth about being, are necessarily caught up in contradictions and are thus in fact transcendental *Schein* ('necessary and unavoidable illusion', AA A298/B354). Yet on their own, the cosmological antinomies merely prove the undeniable indefensibility and inadequacy of the kind of pedantic metaphysics which asserts philosophical truth in dogmatic and one-sided fashion. Hegel is right to say that Plato and Aristotle are not such dogmatic thinkers (*Enc* §36, HW VIII 106) and Schelling insists that Spinoza is neither and that Kant's antinomies are in fact only categorically destructive for *Schulmetaphysik* of the Wolffian ilk which asserts the general features of space, time and the universe without attention to the paradoxical complexity of these categories and to the inherent problematicity of philosophical assertion itself.²⁰ (Pa 417) As we have insisted,

²⁰ For the utmost dialectical sophistication in the discernment of cosmological antinomies in ancient philosophy see once again Plato's *Parmenides* which problematises a number of the antinomies of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, (see especially the antinomy of time Par. 152a-155c, and the antinomy of the limit Par. 164b-165e) or also the intricacy of some of the neo-Platonic cosmological treatises and commentaries – the Kantian cosmological antinomy can at best be seen as a forceful reminder for modern thought to aspire once again for a similarly high level of dialectical self-reflexion in cosmological thought. A further, and perhaps greater, significance of the Kantian antinomies – and this goes equally for the antinomies of the second and third critiques – lies in their function as novel and eminently paradoxical problematisations of metaphysical questions grown on the soil of highly contradictory modern society and exhibiting the intricateness and the intrinsic tension of the modern problems of

among the three sections of the Transcendental Dialectic it is the third section which brings down the entire enterprise of rationalist metaphysics. The reason for this is that with the ontological proof of God, it not only disbands the central theorem of rational theology but also the foundation for the whole of scholastic, neo-scholastic and rationalist ontology or *metaphysica generalis*.

To be sure, there are also other proofs of God apart from the ontological proof. These are, according to Kant's now canonical designation, the physicotheological proof (a proof which argues for the necessity of an intelligent designer, given the observable 'composition and ordering of the present world', AA A620/B648) and the cosmological proof (a proof which rests on the observation of the principle of causality from which follows that 'everything contingent has a cause, which, if it is again contingent, must also have a cause, until the series of subordinated causes must end in a strictly necessary cause [*einer schlechthinnotwendigen Ursache*], without which it would not have completeness', AA A605/B633). Yet as Kant demonstrates, if these proofs are supposed to attest for the necessary being of the supreme creator and not just any (physical or arbitrary) first cause, they must tacitly presuppose the ontological proof and are hence ultimately reducible to the ontological proof. (AA A607/B635 and AA A625/B653) After its earliest Western articulation by Anselm of Canterbury (the proof had been deployed earlier by Ibn Sina and had been the object of considerable controversy in Islamic philosophy before it entered into Medieval European thought) the ontological proof of God is gradually distilled in its pure logical form as the power of logical reasoning advances in scholastic philosophy up to Suárez, and eventually serves as the foundational theorem and systematic anchor of the 17th century rationalist metaphysics of Descartes, Malebranche, Leibniz and Spinoza.

How could the ontological proof acquire such importance? It is necessary to note that what is philosophically at stake in the ontological proof of God is not whether God exists or not (this was neither a question for the inventors of the proof such as Ibn Sina and St. Anselm nor even for its critics and detractors from Al Ghazali's vitriolic rejections of Ibn Sina's rationalism to

philosophy. Take for instance the Antinomy of Practical Reason with its problematisation of the morally required but factually ineffective concatenation of virtue and happiness: a question that gains in significance with the increased personal freedoms of early capitalist society. See especially Adorno's writings on Kant such as *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (Adorno 1995) for an eloquent elaboration of this line of thought.

Gaunilo and Saint Thomas of Aquino as critical respondents to the Archbishop of Canterbury). Rather what is at stake is whether there is an argument by way of which the reasoning mind acquires apodictic certainty of an infinite being beyond its own finitude, since if this was possible, thought would be able to claim the infinite by way of ratiocination alone. No one is more aware of the decisive philosophical importance of the proofs of God than Hegel whose lectures on religion are accompanied by a whole lecture course on the proofs, which Hegel introduces with the following explanation:

‘I give thus at once the general sense in which the given theme, the proofs of the being of God, are taken and demonstrated as truthful. This sense is that they contain the *elevation of human spirit to God* [*Erhebung des Menschengeistes zu Gott*] and that they should express the latter for thought [*für den Gedanken*], just as the elevation itself is an elevation of thought and into the realm of thought... This elevation of the thinking spirit to that which is itself highest thought, God, is that which we want to observe. The same is also essentially grounded in the nature of our spirit, it is necessary for it; it is this necessity which we have in front of us in this elevation, and the presentation of this necessity is itself nothing but that which we call proving.’ (HW XVII 356-357)

And similarly in the *Encyclopaedia* Hegel equates the capacity or propensity to think the proofs of God with the process in which thought transcends the finitude of sense-perception and the reactions to the immediate environment and instead moves towards the sphere of higher or infinite truth (such as that accessible in art, religion and philosophy), thus coming to stand in for the very essence of being human:

‘The so-called proofs of the existence of God are only to be seen as the descriptions and analyses of the course of spirit in itself, which is a thinking and thinks the sensuous. The elevation of thinking above the sensuous, the going-further of the latter beyond the finite and to the infinite, the leap, which is made with a breaking off of the series of the sensuous into the supra-sensuous, all this is the thinking itself, the transition is just thinking. When such transition shall not be made it means that there shall be no thought. In fact animals do not make this transition; they remain in sensuous perception and intuition;’ (Enc. § 50, HW VII 131)

If the proof of God is an elevation of the human spirit to infinity, driven by nothing but its own internal necessity, the process of accomplishment of such a proof will be a process in which reason attests to its own infinity and to the infinity of its own rational constructions – a process which, as Hegel's lectures argue, historically progresses from esoteric or mystical premonition to explicit and systematic knowledge. Classical or rationalist metaphysics reaches its summit or its most pronounced form precisely once the ontological proof of God has been rendered fully explicit and has taken on its most potent form. If the proof succeeds, it would be able to anchor thought in the unlimited and the necessary and thus act as the Archimedean point (explicitly sought by Descartes in the second meditation) from which the concepts of reason could transcend the limitations of the human condition and surpass the contingency of external (empirical, factual, historical, etc.) reality.²¹ This is why Kant says that the proof of God is born out of the 'urgent need of reason to suppose something which could completely underlie the understanding in the continuous determination of its concepts.' (AA A583 B611)

The technical formulation of the proof itself, radically condensed, runs as such: a being can be thought that is the most perfect of all beings. In case this being did not exist, a more perfect being could be thought, namely one that did exist, hence the most perfect of all beings must exist (see the paradigmatic statement in Anselm's *Proslogion*, §2 – Descartes' fifth meditation makes essentially the same argument of existence as a perfection implicit in the concept of God). Now Kant's rejoinder is that in the proof one is confusing real and logical necessity, for 'the unconditioned necessity of judgments is not an absolute necessity of things. Because the absolute necessity of judgment is only a conditioned necessity of the thing, or of the predicate in judgment.' (AA A594 / B622) Just because there is a logical necessity for the concept of God to include existence (along with all the other attributes implicit in the theistic

²¹ To be sure, the nature of these speculative systems can differ greatly according to the predilections of the philosopher deploying the proof of God and the systematic position of the proof. So for instance St. Anselm's *Proslogion* (Anselm 2005) begins in the opening chapters with the ontological proof and then moves on to construct atop of the proof the familiar Ptolemaic cosmological order sustained by God and stratified according to grades of diminishing joy and perfection, while on the other hand Descartes *Meditations* (Descartes 1986) use the ontological proof to escape the deadlock of excessive epistemic skepticism and regain the demonstrable certainty of a mathematically ordered world and an active subjective existence, only superficially retaining adherence to the scholastic grades of perfection.

concept of God, such as ‘infinite, eternal, immutable, independent, supremely intelligent, supremely powerful’ as per Descartes’ Third Meditation) it does not follow that there is also a real necessity for the existence of this God, or of that which is denoted by this concept of God. Concept and existence are not identical. Thus Kant insists that ‘without further ado, this contemplative argutation’ would be ‘dissolved through a precise determination of the concept of existence.’ (AA A598/B626) The confusion of the ontological argument lies in taking existence as a real predicate which adds a real property to a thing, such as the property of being red or being heavy. However, existence is not such a real predicate but ‘merely the position of a thing,’ (AA A598/B626) which means that the existence of a thing is the condition for it to be able to have real properties like being red or being heavy. The only way that existence could be grasped as a predicate is when it is taken as a logical predicate (a property attributed to something merely in thought) but any logical predicate can be attributed to anything just as long as the predication is not self-contradictory – thus something could logically not be red and not red. The logical predication does not tell us anything about how things really are but only about how they could possibly be.

Thinking can only ever determine the logical predicates of things but it can never determine the real predicates, which are to be determined by factual or empirical experience. Thought can say how things can be logically but it can never say which things there really are and famously Kant argues that the concept of 100 thalers alone does not make him richer while their existence does make him richer but adds nothing to the concept of the thalers, (AA A599/B627) and moreover likens the attempt to enrich one’s knowledge about existence through ideas alone to the self-deceptive attempt to improve one’s financial endowment by adding a number of zeros in the accounting books (AA 602/B630).²² Trivial accounting wisdom aside, the philosophical point is that essence and existence are ontologically distinct and that the existence of a thing can not be gleaned or extracted (*ausgeklaut* or *herausgeklaut*) from its conceptual essence, (AA A603/B633) – a distinction which Schelling denotes by the Thomasian concepts of quiddity (essence) and quoddity (existence)

²² Perhaps Adorno’s characterisation of Kant’s thought as the quintessential metaphysicist of nascent bourgeois capitalism is not entirely ungrounded, although certainly one-sided. See once again Adorno’s *Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason* or also the treatment of Kant in *Negative Dialectics*. (Adorno 1995 and Adorno 2000)

thus returning Kant's critique of the ontological argument to its historical forerunner.²³

Through the critical deployment of the distinction between existence and essence, Kant rejects and refutes the pretensions of metaphysical reason to deduce the existing and actual world, and as Schelling notes: 'Kant leaves to reason nothing but science enclosed in the essence of things.' (Pa 137) Cosmic reason – the reason which logically deduces the existing world – absolutely depends on the ontological argument in order to proceed from the essential and conceptual domain of reason into the domain of existence, as only the ontological argument can ground and support the transition from essence into existence. What remains for reason 'enclosed in the essence of things' after the destruction of the ontological argument is not nothing but precisely, the purely negative but essential task of disclosing the essences or the *whatness* of things whereas their positive *thatness* remains an extra-logical outside of reason. As Schelling continues with regards to this outside, 'if however, after the dissolution of the old metaphysics, this other positive element has been completely negated, or whether it could not precisely now freely and independently take shape in its own science, this was the further question.' (Pa 137) The two antagonistic answers given to this further question by Hegel and Schelling are at the very crux of our problematic.

But let us stay with Kant for the moment, to grasp better what exactly happens in the decisive chapter of the Ideal of Pure Reason as this is the foundation on which the opposing trajectories proposed by Hegel and Schelling, and in extension, the project of the present study, are grounded. As we noted earlier, the chapter begins with the reference to Plato's doctrine of ideas in the context of what Kant calls the transcendental ideal of pure reason or

²³ In fact, like the ontological argument itself, the Thomasian distinction between quidditas and quodditas derives from Ibn Sina, whose distinction between وجود (existence) and ماهية (essence) figures as the very conceptual foundation of all of Islamic philosophy. In later Iranian philosophy, the distinction serves as the ground for a critique of the ontological argument (already initiated by al Ghazali), which, in the work of the Neo-Platonist 'existentialists' Suhrawardi and particularly Mulla Sadra, results in a veritable existential cosmology with astonishing parallels to Schelling. These links, together with the debt of European philosophy to Islamic thought and particularly to Ibn Sina, are considerable and obvious but have yet remained largely ignored apart from a number of French commentators. On the debt of Aquinas and the tradition of European existential philosophy to Ibn Sina see especially Étienne Gilson's *L'être et l'existence*, (Gilson 2002) on Suhrawardi and Sadra see the work of Christian Jambet and especially *L'acte d'être* (Jambet 2002).

prototypen transscendentale, and only then proceeds into the destructions of the three proofs of God (and eventually into a general and methodological critique of speculative theology). If the destruction of the ontological proof of God brings about the demise of rationalist ontology and its correlating deduction of existence through cosmic reason, the section on the Transcendental Ideal of Pure Reason offers the key to Kant's transcendental supersession of general ontology. In his dissertation of 1755, entitled *Nova dilucidatio*, Kant had already perfectly discerned the ontological function of God in classical metaphysics as guarantor of the conceptual determination of existence. Here, Kant speaks of the – still hypothetical – case in which this guarantor would vanish and of its devastating effect on the ontological determination of things as such:

‘Therefore it is clear that when God is taken away, not only the existence of all things, but also their internal possibility is entirely destroyed. Though the essences (which consist in the internal possibility) are usually called unconditionally necessary, one would express oneself more correctly by saying that the essences are attributed to the things with unconditional necessity... that there is something at all which can be thought and from which then the concept of every conceivable thing derives through connection, limitation and determination, this could not be grasped, if there was not in God, the source of all reality, that in actuality, which is contained in the concept.’ (AA I 395-396)

It is not that the essences of things are absolutely necessary by themselves but it is the unconditioned necessity of God, the source of all reality (*omnis realitatis fonte*, AA I 396), the all of reality (*omnitudo realitatis* AA I 395), which in extension grants logical necessity to the essences of existing things. As the all of reality, God is the ontological substratum which makes conceptual determination possible by limitation and negation of its own unlimited reality. This is Kant's central figure of thought which, once discovered, remains with Kant literally until the very end, that is, up to the last convolutes of the *Opus Postumum* written between 1800 and 1803.²⁴ As the insight of the indefensibility of the ontological proof of

²⁴ It goes without saying that our methodological injunction to think the whole of Schelling's philosophy as one integrated – if diverse and multi-faceted – project, also applies to Kant, or to any other great thinker for that matter. The true and deep insight is precisely gained by speculatively grasping the unity of a complex thinker, not by compartmentalising ostensibly enclosed and incompatible phases (a sign of intellectual laziness rather than exceptional

God, and with it, the entire edifice of classical metaphysics, progressively grows, Kant realises that he needs to find a way to safeguard the ontological function of the all of reality in metaphysics, in absence of support by the ontological argument. In the *Only Possible Argument for the Existence of God* of 1763 Kant has already found his main objection against the ontological argument (that existence is not a predicate, see the first observation, AA II 70 ff) and only allows a minimal ontological proof which works on the basis of the distinction between a material (real) possibility and a formal (logical) possibility and requires the former for the all of reality – functioning as ‘real-ground [*der Realgrund*] of absolute possibility’ in which the ‘data and the material of the thinkable’ are given, (AA II 79-81) but already holds that existence cannot be formally or logically necessary (existence cannot be deduced logically). Kant’s original insight in 1763 is already hence that existence must be understood as absolute position and not as result or derivative of a logical position. Subsequently, the development of the transcendental apparatus in the *Critique of Pure Reason* allows Kant to rearticulate the material necessity of an all of reality as substratum of conceptual determination elegantly in the doctrine of the transcendental ideal of pure reason.

‘If hence a transcendental substratum is posited as the ground for thorough-going determination in our reason, that as it were contains the entire resources of material from which all possible predicates of things can be taken, thus this substratum is nothing else than the idea of an all of reality (*omnitude realitatis*). All true negations are then nothing but limitations, which they could not be called if the unlimited (the all) was not their ground.’ (AA B604)

In the notebooks of the *Reflexions on Metaphysics* (Phase ψ) we further find that the all of reality is ‘the ontological place for all possible things, insofar as they are distinct at all from one another as things’ and that ‘their difference consists then merely in the limitation of the concept of the *omnitude realitatis*’ which is the thoroughly determined real-ground that provides the data and the material for any conceptual determination. (AA XVIII 361)

However, unlike in the ontology of classical metaphysics, this real-ground can not be deemed an actual existence but must rather be taken as an idea, or more precisely, as the idea of ideas: the transcendental ideal of pure reason. It is enough for reason to be able to imagine the thorough-going determination, this process of imagination will deliver the material for the

technical rigour): a young enthused Marx and a mature scientific Marx, a naïve Kant, a critical Kant and a senile Kant, a systematic Foucault and a historical Foucault, etc.

determination without the need to suppose an actually existing ontological substratum. This reformulation of the substratum is the most important result of Kant's reduction of ontology to transcendental logic. As we remember, in transcendental philosophy, the idea is an ordering principle of the content of experience through a totality of determinations. Given this function of the idea, the ideal is an even higher ordering principle (the highest order) according to thorough-going – that is, complete and exhaustive – determination, going through the whole of all possible predicates. The function of the transcendental ideal thus becomes the highest ordering principle, or the cosmogenetic principle through the operation of which categorical determination by the understanding is driven and a phenomenal world comes into being :

‘The proposition: all existing is thoroughly determined, does not only mean that from each pair of given opposites, but also of all possible predicates always one is attributed to it; through this proposition not only predicates are logically compared amongst each other but the thing itself is transcendently compared with the complexus of all possible predicates [*dem Inbegriffe aller möglichen Prädicate*]. This says as much as: in order to cognise a thing completely, one must cognise all that is possible and must thus, whether affirming or negating, determine it. The thorough-going determination is hence a concept, which we can never present *in concreto* according to its totality, and which is thus based on an idea that has its seat merely in reason and which prescribes to the understanding the rule of its complete use.’ (AA B601)

As we see, Kant's transcendental articulation of the all of reality manages to maintain the productive or creative function of the ontological substratum without having to assert its positive existence, and succeeds in doing so by grasping the material data for thorough-going determination as delivered by reason and its ideal of complete determination – the summit of all which is possible – which prescribes to the understanding ‘its complete use’ through comparison with the rational substratum of all possibility. As Schelling explains this process, ‘the first for each thing’ is to be possible according to its formal or logical possibility which means that it can not be self-contradictory, while the real or material possibility means to go through the series of all determinations to actually determine the thing such that for example ‘each thing will be either corporal or non-corporal, if corporal, either organic or non-organic, if non-organic, either solid or fluid, if solid, either regular or irregular according to basic shape, if regular, it will be one of the five regular bodies which are its basis, e.g. the pyramid

or the cube; but always the assigned will exclude the other' (possibility).²⁵ (SW XII 284) Through this transcendental operation reason is now able to determine existence without being able to deduce existence a priori as in the rationalist metaphysics. While the ontological proof of God, as the core of classical ontology, has been disbanded, the transcendental rearticulation of the all of reality becomes a heuristic function of world-determination in the transcendental consciousness or in the '*cosmotheoros*' who is at once a '*Weltbewohner*' (world-dweller) and a '*Weltbeschauer*' (world-observer) as Kant articulates much more plastically in the unfinished integral scheme of the *Opus Postumum*.²⁶ (AA XXI 31, XX 553)

²⁵ It is well known that Hegel often mocks the Kantian transcendental ideal of pure reason, for example as 'the grandiose expression of the universal law that *each* thing is to receive of *all* so called opposed predicates one and not the other, such that spirit is either white or not white, yellow or not yellow, etc., to infinity.' (Enc. § 119, HW VIII 244) What Hegel generously chooses to ignore here and elsewhere in his mockery is of course that as opposed to his own universal grid of logical intelligibility in the *Science of Logic*, the Kantian (and the Schellingian) matrix of object-construction only produces objects strictu sensu – spirit is not such a thing or object and is not supposed to be determined through elimination of contradictories. For Kant spirit would remain a noumenal concept that cannot be logically determined at all (but which can have practical effect), while for Schelling spirit can be perfectly known, but in a translogical, narrative and symbolic way which exceeds the domain of object-logic.

²⁶ In this sense it is correct to speak of Kant's philosophy as a post-Copernican philosophy. While Copernicus has shattered the physical model at the core of the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic universe with its perfectly harmonious spheres and orbs and its cyclical internal order, Kant's critical intervention radically cuts down the conceptual and logical tools of construction through which the ancient cosmology had been able to integrate reality into the rationally ordered harmonic spheres of the cosmos. What however inexorably reemerges once the classical cosmos is shattered, is the chaos of the mythologies and the early speculative naturalists, which had been suppressed in the genesis of the logically ordered cosmos. Unsurprisingly, Kant encounters the chaos at key junctions of his thought, particularly in his early astronomical scheme in the *Universal Natural History* of 1755 which attempt to grasp the chaos as matrix of stellar and galactic generation governed by Newtonian mechanics, and once again in the unfinished but yet vastly productive *Opus Postumum* where Kant seeks to proceed to an integration of the transcendental apparatus into a universal philosophy of nature and is forced to confront the speculative or philosophical concept of chaos once again. As the

But if the world comes into being as a function of the ordering work of reason in the human being or more generally the *cosmotheoros* (including extra-terrestrial intelligent beings of whom Kant repeatedly writes with conviction), then the question becomes what remains outside of this ordering function. What about the supra-sensuous infinity beyond the ordered world of phenomenal reality which we may still be inclined to think even though we can no longer prove its existence? Here, in the beyond of ordered reality, in the great outside, there is nothing but an abyss for Kant – a veritable vertigo of philosophy.

‘The unconditioned necessity, which we so indispensably require, as the last carrier of all things, is the true abyss for human reason [*der wahre Abgrund für die menschliche Vernunft*]. Even eternity, as terrifyingly sublime a Haller may describe it, does not make the vertiginous impression on the disposition for long; for it only measures the duration of things but does not carry them. One cannot resist the thought but can neither bear it: that a being, which we can imagine as the highest under all possible beings, may say to itself: I am from eternity to eternity, outside of me there is nothing which was not something merely through my will; but whence I am? Here everything sinks under us, and the greatest perfection, like the smallest, hovers without foothold before speculative reason, which could as well let one or the other disappear.’ (AA A613 / B 641)

Here, nearing the abysmal unground where ‘everything sinks under us’, we surmise the chaos outside of our cosmogenetic world-constructions – and as Schelling reminds us, the *Abgrund* (abyss) is simply the German name for chaos, which as ‘χάος’ has the same root as ‘χάω, χαίνω, χάζω’ and refers to ‘the retreat into the depth, the standing-open, the gaping open’ (SW XII 596, 614) or the yawning abyss. Despite the glimpse into the abyss, the Kantian transcendental apparatus produces a cocoon of finite but stable experience which generally succeeds at protecting us from such encounters with the unfathomable. Encapsulated in the ordered sphere of phenomenal reality we fathom chaos only in limit-experiences such as the aesthetic experience of the sublime, where the transcendental functions of stabilisation fail

Opus Postumum was only published almost a century after it had been written, its fertile attempts had no direct effect on Hegel and Schelling, which however does not mean that we must refrain from constructing a retroactive effect. For a general and still seminal presentation of the history and the logic of the transition from the classical cosmos to the infinity of the modern universe, see Alexandre Koyré’s *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Koyré 2009).

due to internal conflict of the transcendental operations and the experience of the unbounded power of natural forces ‘in their chaos or their wildest, most unruly disorder and devastation’ threatens to distort and destabilise our reality, and in doing so refers us to the supra-sensuous unground of our experience. (CJ § 23. AA V 246, see also CJ § 29)

But despite its looming presence beyond the stable coordinates of the phenomenal microcosmos in which we as finite intellects are epistemically inscribed, the supra-sensuous remains an unknowable and inaccessible outside to our reality and cannot be thought lest we fall into a prohibitive logic of illusion. Thus the ideas – and chief among them the three ideas of the totalities (God, the cosmos and the soul) can only be understood as a kind of ‘*focus imaginarius*’ of our worldview – a vanishing point which itself remains invisible but in the perspective of which the objects of a given domain (here, the domain of experience as a whole) acquire their appropriate meaning. Hereby Kant has accomplished his envisaged reinterpretation of the Platonic doctrine of ideas freed from the Parmenidean supposition of the identity of concept and reality.²⁷ (AA B672) However, the price for this rearticulation is the well known encapsulation in a finite sphere surrounded by an unthought and undisclosed outside, the cosmos of the *cosmotheoros* is in fact only the world of intersubjective anthropic experience, it is not the cosmos of a veritable cosmology in which the unfolding of the infinite is grasped and in which the finite sphere of phenomena is an element within a larger whole. Both Schelling and Hegel seek to overcome this restriction and once again expand the

²⁷ It is interesting to note that Kant first introduces the concept of the *focus imaginarius* – at great length – in his polemical treatise on Swedenborg: the *Dreams of a Spirit Seer*. In this text Kant explains the visions of the psychic through an analogy to the *focus imaginarius* which in the spirit seer is posited outside of himself, who thus sees the psychic reality of consciousness in the world and as part of the world instead of merely feeling it in himself. (third section of *Dreams of a Spirit Seer*, AA III 344 ff) Despite the condemning tone of the pamphlet (starkly opposed to praise of Swedenborg in Kant’s private letters) it is clear that Kant is not entirely rejecting any claims to truth in the visions of the seer and the analogy of the *focus imaginarius* could also be interpreted as the explanation of an extraordinary parapsychological talent instead of a psychopathology if one only ignores the jibes and derision. As the text goes on to note, there is an inherent similarity and relatedness of psychic vision and metaphysics, perhaps even to the extent that the one immediately sees what the other produces in thought – this would also explain why Kant only again returns to the analogy of the *focus imaginarius* to illuminate the structure of the metaphysical ideas.

purview of philosophy towards such a holographic cosmology, yet their respective means and strategies are opposed. While Schelling radicalises and intensifies the Kantian discovery of chaos into a speculative philosophy of the historical facticity of a translogical Absolute grounded on chaos, Hegel sublates the chaos into the Absolute as historical necessity of a superior reason which negates and integrates chaos once again.

Hegel's Superior Ontological Proof of God

For both Hegel and Schelling, Kant has irrevocably destroyed classical metaphysics and with it anything resembling a rational deduction of the world in the manner of Wolffian general ontology. As Hegel writes in the introduction to the *Science of Logic*, 'that which before this period had the name of metaphysics, has been exterminated root and branch and has disappeared from the ranks of sciences.' (HW V 13) But although Kant delivers the means to a rearticulation of metaphysics, his still timid steps in this direction do not suffice to adequately fill the void generated by the collapse of the grand schemes of world-interpretation provided by classical metaphysics. Following the 'exoteric doctrine' of Kantianism, that is, the seemingly anti-metaphysical stance which on a shallow reading of Kant seems to demand a cessation instead of a rearticulation of metaphysics, what Hegel sees ensuing in the immediate post-Kantian field is the 'strange spectacle' of 'an educated people without metaphysics – like an otherwise richly decorated temple without sanctum.' (HW V14) While the majority of the thinkers of the Romantic generation seek to go beyond Kant in some way or another, it is Hegel and Schelling and Hölderlin – the thinkers of what has been called the *Tübingen Axiomatic* and the symphilosophical co-authors of the *Earliest System Program of German Idealism* – who most affirmatively seek to do so through the foundation of a new post-critical cosmology.²⁸ As the *Earliest System Program* already states in nuce, only a renewed holographic vision of the universe in which knowledge and action, reason and mythology, would once again be united, could overcome the separation of theoretical knowledge, practical action and aesthetic intuition, in the Kantian critique and its unresolved duality between finite knowledge and infinite demand. (The world as ordered cosmos becomes a 'most extreme demand [of reason] towards the unconditioned', CJ § 76, AA V 401, the existence of God becomes a 'high moral demand' CJ § 87, AA V 447, and God,

²⁸ For the *Tübinger Axiomatik* see Panagiotis Kondylis' magisterial study *The Genesis of Dialectic*, (Kondylis 1994) produced under the supervision of Dieter Henrich and inspired by Henrich's method of *Konstellationsforschung* (see also Heinrich 2010). More recently, Manfred Frank's investigations have been extraordinarily important in the illumination of the genesis of German Idealism. See *Der Unendliche Mangel an Sein*, (Frank 1988) and *Auswege aus dem Idealismus* (Frank 2007).

freedom and immortality become postulates of pure practical reason in the *Critique of Practical Reason*).²⁹

As we have seen above, this unresolved duality is the result of Kant's destruction of the ontological proof of God which suspends thought in a sphere of self-generated certainty and self-imposed imperatives while barring the possibility of any positive access to its own ultimate ground, leaving thought ungrounded or unfounded in an emphatic sense. The first step to a refoundation is hence to rethink the very question of foundation [*Grundlegung*] itself, which almost instantly becomes the main task of immediate post-Kantian philosophy sparked by Reinhold's *Elementarphilosophie* and the intensive discussions that ensue from it.³⁰ What the diverse participants of this discussion, from the critical voices of Maimon and Aenesidemus to the affirmative ones of Beck and Fichte, have in common, is that they attempt to think the possibility or impossibility of reliable foundations of thought from within the ambits of transcendental philosophy – that is to say, according to our construction, within the sphere of possibilities prescribed by the destruction of the ontological proof of God. Among these attempts, Fichte's *Grundlage der Wissenschaftslehre* of 1794/1795 is the most potent and the one that goes closest towards the foundation of a post-critical metaphysics. Although

²⁹ As Hegel says in the *Difference Essay*, the very 'need for philosophy' arises out of the desire to overcome the diremptions characteristic for the divisive ruptures of modernity, symptomatically articulated as aporetic oppositions and unresolved antinomies in transcendental philosophy. (HW II 20 ff.) If the unresolved Kantian antinomies are the expression of the antagonistic tensions which already pervade nascent capitalist society and which would become characteristic for modernity, the program of overcoming and reconciliation initiated by the immediate post-Kantian generation would be the foundation (whether acknowledged or not) not just for the grand synthesis of Marx and Engels but more generally for liberatory and egalitarian movements to come, perhaps until the disillusion of the twentieth century put a temporary hold on the desire for emancipatory universalism. Hölderlin's *Hyperion* can be seen as a primary aesthetic expression of the discontent with modern fragmentation and the yearning for reconciliation and integration.

³⁰ More romantically inclined successors like Schiller search for a resolution to the stark and Kantian opposition of finite knowledge and infinite duty in the intimations of infinity which Kant allows to surface in the aesthetic experience, such as the *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (Schiller 2000) – producing and aesthetic re-inscription of the Kantian moralism, yet without being able to expand the ambits of knowledge.

Hegel, Schelling and Hölderlin decisively go beyond the Fichtean transformation of transcendental philosophy, it is instructive to investigate the diverging terms of this transgression as it determines the character of the resulting post-critical metaphysics.

Fichte's foundation sets out from the Reinholdian principle of consciousness [*Satz des Bewusstseins*] which in turn hypostasises the Kantian synthetic unity of apperception (the 'highest point' to which 'transcendental philosophy must be attached' according to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, AA B 134) as the elementary factum on which to ground all knowledge. But in the *Recension of Aenesidemus* of 1792, Fichte sides with the critique of Aenesidemus (also voiced by Maimon) that the principle of consciousness can not be taken at once as universally necessary and as given fact since a fact would have to be corroborated through empirical introspection, the necessity of which could be disputed. The principle of consciousness must not be taken as a fact but as an act, not a *Tatsache* but a *Tathandlung* – however, not an empirical act but a transcendental act which, while constitutive of consciousness, remains itself unobservable for consciousness. Hence it is not the constitutive act of consciousness – the I am or 'I think' which according to Kant 'must accompany all my representations' (AA B 131-132) – is perceived as empirically given but rather it is *posited* [*gesetzt*] as the original representation of representation. As Fichte says in the *Recension of Aenesidemus*, 'the power of representation [*das Vorstellungsvermögen*] exists *for* the power of representation and *through* the power of representation', or also 'the I is *what* it is, and *because* it is, *for* the I' (GA I 1 57). It is the self-referential position of the I – effectively realised in the practical experience as free moral agent – which Fichte calls intellectual intuition. In this sense, the Kantian cosmotheoros (established in the *Opus Postumum* by Kant through a quasi-Fichtean doctrine of transcendental self-positing – 'the subject posits itself a priori' AA XXII 417, 'the subject posits itself in pure intuition' AA XXII 452, and *passim*) is in the Fichtean rearticulation no longer a conditioned subject relative to a noumenal and unattainable ground but an absolute subject or absolute I for which there is no externality apart from that which it posits itself as external Not-I.³¹ Or as Fichte proclaims in the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* of 1794/1795:

³¹ The position of the Not-I, in § 2 of the classical statement of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, is a necessary step in the foundation of knowledge, as only the synthesis of the third step, given in § 3, produces the epistemic relation of subject to object. It is wrong to understand Fichte as vulgar idealist for whom the world is 'merely' our representation. The world necessarily has the structure of a Not-I for the absolute subject, which as Fichte develops in the numerous

‘Therein consists now the essence of the *critical* philosophy, that an absolute I is set up as unconditioned simpliciter and not determinable through anything higher, and if this philosophy follows consequently out of this principle [*aus diesem Grundsatz*] then it becomes doctrine of science.’ (GgWL I, § 3, GA I 2 279)

If the canonic modern foundation of apodictic certainty by Descartes, encapsulated in the famous *cogito ergo sum*, ultimately depends on the ontological proof of God as guarantor of the reliability of thought in the *cogito*, Fichte’s refoundation after the critical destruction of the ontological proof, radically reduces the ground of knowledge to a *sum ergo sum*, no longer guaranteed by a theoretical argument but now only based on the evidence of an act, in turn made possible by the moral autonomy of the practical subject.³² We clearly discern a logical

restatements of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, is not just the subject of human consciousness but of any intelligence whatsoever including the supreme intelligence of God, which is why the later statements of the *Wissenschaftslehre* explicate intellectual intuition as vision-in-God captured in the late Fichtean concept of the image of the Absolute [*das Bild des Absoluten*] and the vision [*das Gesicht*] (see especially the *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1812 and 1813, in GA II 13 and II 17). We have here a clear approximation, evident in much of German Idealism from Fichte to Schopenhauer, to typically Eastern metaphysics and particularly to the Indian Vedanta tradition with its experiential and speculative identity of Atman and Brahman.

³² The collapse of theoretical subjectivity into practical subjectivity grasped in the concept *Tathandlung* accounts for the necessity of an experiential enactment of the foundation, which thus acquires the character of an existential crisis or epiphany. The philosopher must truly experience himself as free if he is to grasp the structure of knowledge. This is why Fichte always insists on the essentially oral and performative nature of the *Wissenschaftslehre* (all the existing texts of the doctrine are only conceived as supplementary readings to the lectures in which Fichte famously asked his students to perform meditative and introspective practices, corroborating the proximity of German Idealism to Eastern philosophy with its insistence on practical transformative experience as ground of theoretical knowledge) even going so far as to say in the version of 1804 that any written document is principally inappropriate for an adequate presentation of the idea of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. (GA II 7 193) To be precise, the *Wissenschaftslehre* is not itself the theoretical foundation of knowledge but rather it is the theoretical support or verbal guide for a practical foundation which must not just be understood but enacted.

circle within this deductive foundation (the I posits itself as ground of knowledge as which it then proceeds to discover itself), yet according to Fichte the circle is not a shortcoming but a necessary feature of the deduction if it is truly to function as a first and secure foundation. As we shall see in the following, Hegel and Schelling would each retain one element of the Fichtean deduction: for Hegel the foundation of knowledge has to have the form of a logical circle (enacted in grand style in the *Science of Logic*) while for Schelling it is the aspect of the transformational practical experience which is the essential feature of foundation.

It may seem as if Fichte may have succeeded in establishing a post-critical foundation for metaphysics which eschews the ontological proof of God, yet this verdict is not entirely correct. Our core thesis remains that the ontological proof is the figure of thought without which metaphysics is not possible. Thus on further inspection we discern clearly in the consequences of the Fichtean philosophy a minor or limited reenactment of the ontological proof which proceeds through an ontologisation of the Kantian moral proof of God, delivered by Kant in § 87 of the *Critique of Judgment* which states that ‘thus we must assume a moral world-cause [*eine Weltursache*] (a world-originator) [*einen Welturheber*] in order to posit for ourselves a final purpose according to the moral law; and insofar as the latter is necessary, so it is to the same extent (i.e., to the same degree and for the same ground) the former is also to be supposed as necessary: namely that there be a God.’ (AA V 450) However, in § 88 of the *Critique of Judgment* Kant restricts the moral proof to ‘subjective-practical reality’ (AA V 453) and specifies in § 90 that the proof (as well as the physicotheological proof) is not a proof ‘κατ’ ἀληθειαν’ but merely a proof ‘κατ’ ἀνθρώπων’, or only a proof that has validity for the sphere of human action but not for that of theoretical knowledge. Yet in the Fichtean collapse of practical and theoretical certainty, this distinction does no longer hold, which is why Fichte can render proclaim in *On the Ground for our Belief in a divine World-Government* of 1798 that the ‘living and active moral order is itself God’ (GA I 5 354) – rendering the moral proof of God constitutive as opposed to merely regulative – while in § 9 of the still Kantian *Critique of all Revelation* of 1792 (that is before Fichte had formulated the *Wissenschaftslehre*) Fichte had still held that ‘all belief in God is belief in the concreto presented moral law’ (GA I 5 85) but not that the moral law *is* itself God.³³

³³ Fichte makes these clear statements in the context of the *Atheismusstreit* (dispute on atheism) between himself and Jacobi, in which Jacobi holds that the absolutisation or ontologisation of the moral proof amounts to atheism since then God has no external reality, independent of moral conviction.

For Hölderlin, Hegel and Schelling the Fichtean minor or moralistic metaphysics amounts to a veritable impoverishment of metaphysics since it excludes the becoming of nature from its ambits and results in a concept of nature that is an ‘absolutely effected and dead’ (HW II 80) as Hegel objects – defending Schelling’s critique of Fichte in the *Naturphilosophie* – in the *Difference Essay*.³⁴ In Fichte the whole of reality (the main category developed throughout the *Wissenschaftslehre*) is morally constituted as resistance opposing freedom, which effectively does not alleviate but exacerbate the Kantian antinomy of nature and freedom. For Hegel, Hölderlin and Schelling whose aspiration had from the beginning been to think ‘Ἐν καὶ πᾶν (the motto of ancient Pantheism, written by Hölderlin into Hegel’s yearbook) the adequate foundation for a post-critical metaphysics which can form the basis for a holographic cosmology integrating nature and freedom, must be sought at a deeper ontological level than the self-positing Fichtean subject. The decisive initial impulse for this refoundation is given by Hölderlin in the short anti-Fichtean draft paper *Seyn und Urtheil* of 1795. Here Hölderlin argues that any judgment or separation (Hölderlin uses the terms *Urtheilung* and *Urtheil*, which means judgment but also original scission or partition as ‘*Ur=Theilung*’ according to a speculative etymology), including the ‘thetic judgment’ of the Fichtean $I = I$, necessarily presupposes a prior seamless unity or non-separation, called being or *Seyn* by Hölderlin, without which there could not be any judgment or partition. Hölderlin’s insists that ‘this being [*Seyn*] must not be confused with identity’ and that ‘identity not = the absolute being [*Seyn*]’, arguing hence against the Fichtean view that the relation of identity in the $I = I$, posited or *gesetzt* as X , is already the unity of being (in § 1 of the *Wissenschaftslehre*).³⁵ In his seminal studies on the German Idealist constellation, especially

³⁴ Grant’s *Philosophies of Nature after Schelling* (Grant 2008) dissects the opposition to the Fichtean ‘antiphysics’ and conclusively argues against the prevalence of the latter in much of contemporary philosophy, especially in its phenomenological and language-philosophy based guises. Similarly, Alliez’ *De l’impossibilité de la phenomenologie* (Alliez 1995) synoptically analyses the collapse of the post-phenomenological constellation as grounded on its inability to produce a living account of φύσις like that of the *Naturphilosophie* of Goethean, Schellingian and Deleuzian provenance.

³⁵ *Seyn und Urtheil*, in *Materialien zu Schellings philosophischen Anfängen*, (Frank 1975 p. 108 ff.). See also Jean-Francois Courtine’s essay on Hölderlin in *Extase de la raison: essais sur Schelling* (Courtine 1990). The power of Courtine’s contribution lies in demonstrating the seminal importance of Hölderlin for the late Schelling’s ecstatic conception of the other of

Der Unendliche Mangel an Sein – Schellings Hegelkritik und die Anfänge der Marxschen Dialektik (Frank 1988), and *Auswege aus dem Deutschen Idealismus* (Frank 2007), Manfred Frank has powerfully argued that the crux of the metaphysical dispute between Hegel and Schelling is in fact already established very early on, before the phase of seeming agreement and long before the articulations of opposing systems, and is precisely to be found in antagonistic appropriations of Hölderlin's anti-Fichtean concept of *Seyn*. Both Schelling and Hegel see in Hölderlin's impulse the possibility to step out of the purely intra-subjective moral constitution of reality in Fichte, and to think reality constituted at once as subject and substance or nature. However, each appropriates this possibility in a different manner. Schelling thinks *Seyn* as an irreflexive or rather extra-reflexive facticity.³⁶ Hegel, on the other hand, thinks it as pure self-relation and thus still intra-reflexively (although no longer merely subjectively but objectively insofar as Hegel understands being without further determinations as pure or abstract self-relation).³⁷

reason without – despite clear affinities on the side of the commentator – short-circuiting prematurely to Heidegger. This important founding document of German Idealism was only published in 1961, the first and most influential interpretation was given by Dieter Henrich in the *Hölderlin Jahrbuch* 134 (1965-1966).

³⁶ Frank writes: ‚In my view the one thought, which moves Schelling's philosophising from the beginning, can be very precisely names: *It is the conviction that Being (understood as seamless identity) can not be deduces from the relations of reflexion.*’ (Frank 2007, p. 278)

The following reading of the Hegel-Schelling problematic is indebted to Frank's original insight, although our reconstruction has a different emphasis, focussing on the ontological argument where Frank rather focusses on the problem of reflexivity.

³⁷ In the light of this reconstruction of the foundational differences in the systems of Schelling and Hegel, revealed beyond doubt by scholarship in German Idealism of the last decades, it becomes clear that the old Hegelian-Marxist story of the progression from subjective over objective to absolute idealism in the sequence Fichte-Schelling-Hegel must be abandoned. The relations in the field of forces which makes up the philosophical assemblage known as German Idealism are too complicated to be expressed as a simple series, but we can attempt a more dynamic characterisation. Kant: trans-reflexive and subjective, Fichte: intra-reflexive and subjective, Hegel: intra-reflexive and objective, Schelling: trans-reflexive and objective. There is no order of logical priority or superiority between these positions, they are simply related, yet opposing positions. Like any philosophical position, they must prove their truth and their adequacy in life as much as in theoretical argumentation.

We can already surmise that Schelling will grasp the Hölderlinian *Seyn* as the thatness or quoddity we discussed in the context of the ontological argument, and that this *Seyn* will stand in an intricate relation to the chaotic *Abgrund* which Schelling's archaeological investigations seek to excavate. But instead of leaping right away into a systematic representation of the place and role of these concepts in Schelling's existential cosmology, it is exigent to reconstruct Schelling's position through an immanent confrontation with Hegel's negation and sublation of the Kantian critique into a superior cosmic reason, as it is only by grasping this dichotomy in the post-Kantian philosophy of the Absolute that we can sense what is at stake in Schelling's holographic sketches like those of the *Ages of the World*. It is not only that a reconstruction of the opposition will sharpen our understanding of the conceptual distinctions at work, but in fact Schelling himself only came to a full and explicit development of his distinctive position once the confrontation with Hegel was fully underway. For although Schelling's *Philosophy & Religion* of 1804 already introduces the main themes of existential cosmology and broaches the need for the elaboration of an existential philosophy beyond the negative or purely-rational philosophy of essences, it is only the passionate objection of the *Freedom Essay* of 1809 to Hegel's maturing system, that properly initiates Schelling's articulation of a scheme of translogical cosmology. We can say that the *Auseinandersetzung* with Hegel is the catalyst for the development of Schelling's philosophy, in the same way in which Hegel could only develop his own system of the Absolute through a gradual and persistent work of differentiation from the early Schelling.³⁸

³⁸ The process of Hegel's distancing from Schelling is already in full movement when Hegel writes the *Difference between the Fichtean and the Schellingian Philosophy* of 1802, which is only superficially supportive of the Schellingian position on a deeper level already develops a markedly non-Schellingian understanding of being as self-relation. Hegel's system outlines from the time in Jena are a formidable document for the further development of the differentiation, interspersed as they are, with Schellingian concepts such as the *Potenzen*, but yet already clearly Hegelian in motive and orientation. If the *Preface to the Phenomenology of Spirit* already contains the crux of Hegel's critique of Schelling, the *Science of Logic* is then Hegel's final and definitive anti-Schellingian work. While Schelling is never mentioned by name in the *Science of Logic*, the book is full of critical and polemical attacks on Schelling's philosophy, particularly the doctrine of powers and the theorem of intellectual intuition. Schelling is clearly the most important invisible presence in the *Logic*.

We have noted that the Hölderlinian *Seyn* is understood by Hegel as pure or abstract self-relation: 'in its indeterminate immediacy it is only equal to itself.' [*ist es nur sich selbst gleich*] (HW V 82) This is why the sheer being, the 'reflexionless being' which is 'the being, as it is immediately only in itself' (ibid) in the first category of the *Logic* can be understood by Hegel as the pure and empty thought or thought itself, or rather thought as the *concept* of being since the concept is simply for Hegel this self-relation. It seems as if this being by which the *Logic* begins – this immediate and reflexionless being – is exactly the Hölderlinian *Seyn*, the pure being outside of any reflexive determination or partition. But in fact Hegel has already introduced a significant difference by thinking something more in the sheer being, namely that it can be thought as abstract relation to itself, something neither Hölderlin nor Schelling will grant sheer being, which for the latter must be thought as radically relationsless and conceptless. Be that as it may, we have already in the very beginning of the *Logic* a neo-Parmenidean identification of being and thought, which progressively becomes richer and wider as, driven by the immanent necessity of its own movement, thought runs through the various determinations of being, essence and the concept, and eventually becomes the richest and most determined 'concrete' and 'intensive totality'. (HW VI 572) The fully developed totality is the absolute idea, which then in turn – having run through all the positions of being – sets itself free [*sich frei entläßt*, HW VI 573] into nature, history, religion and art, determining the realms of natural and spiritual life as momenta of an integrated universal unfolding in the great sphere of the Absolute. This astonishing holographic vision of an integral cosmology seems thus to be the result of the simple supposition of abstract self-relation as the being of pure being, or the identification of being and thought.

But the figure of thought which deduces the determinations of reality out of the internal necessity of thought is already known to us. We have encountered it previously as the ontological proof of God. Not surprisingly then, not only is there the apparent and obvious fact that the ontological proof is discussed numerous times in the *Logic*, in all the different parts, and in virtually all crucial junctions, but furthermore the crucial philosophical operation of the *Logic*, the leading of the concept from thought into existence, is precisely accomplished through a superior reenactment of the ontological proof after and against its destruction by Kant. In this sense the whole of the *Science of Logic* can be seen as one vast rearticulated ontological proof of God. The crux of the Hegelian superior proof, and thus of the whole *Logic*, takes place in the logic of essence, the second part of the *Science of Logic* and according to Hegel 'the most difficult' part of the whole logic, which 'contains the categories

of metaphysics and science simpliciter [*der Wissenschaft überhaupt*]', (HW VIII 236, *Enc.* § 114) or, it can be said, which takes the place of what previously was metaphysics. It is here, in the logic of essence, where the concept acquires existence or where logic passes over into metaphysics. Yet again put differently (and in more Kantian terminology) it is here where formal-ontology passes over into material-ontology and where thus the real ground of the dialectic of the concept is to be found. Thus we are told rather in passing at the beginning of the chapter on appearance, in the section on existence – after essence has appeared and has passed into existence – that now the ontological proof of God has been accomplished. (HW VI 126) We can discern the following momenta in Hegel's superior ontological proof: 1) the truth of being is reflexion, 2) the movement of reflexion is contradiction, 3) the expression of contradiction is the concept. As we see, in a certain sense Hegel's ontological proof proceeds in the reverse direction to the classical proof, as for instance in St. Anselm, since it begins with pure being and ends with the concept instead of beginning with the concept and proving its being (although of course we begin with the pure concept of being and end with the being of the concept).³⁹ Let us examine the three momenta which make up the proof more closely .

1) The logic of essence begins with the realisation that 'the truth of being is essence'. (HW VI 13) We remember that Hegel begins the *Logic* with the Hölderlinian *Seyn* grasped as 'reflexionless' and 'immediate' being. Subsequently, the determinations of the logic of being proceed as if we are witnessing the immanent unfolding of irreflexive ontological categories. We might already ask ourselves why there is movement in the concept of being – the movement could simply stop despite the contradiction and despite the missed opportunity for further determination and sublation – as Schelling notes 'I can say of thought that it moves;

³⁹ This reversal of sorts is only possible since the movement of thought in the *Science of Logic* runs through progressive determination but retrogressive grounding, which means that the complete or sufficient ground for the identity of concept and being is not given at the outset but only produced as the *Logic* proceeds towards the end. Nonetheless, Hegel admits at the end of the *Logic*, in a rehabilitation of intellectual intuition, that thought or rather the concept must already have had a 'suprasensuous, internal intuition' of itself at the beginning of the *Logic*, so that it could proceed through the series of determinations towards its own retrogressive grounding, and so that at least there must be an implicit necessity of the proof contained in the simple 'abstract relation to the self which is being'. (HW VI 553-554) This must be the most extreme case in the history of thought of drawing maximal conclusions from minimal premisses.

but to ascribe a motion to the concept is, one cannot say a bold, but only a cold metaphor! It can be grasped that the subject will not stand still. But an empty concept has no necessitation to fill itself, just because it is empty.’ (Pa 222) However, as we proceed from indifference – the last category of the logic of being – into the logic of essence, we find out that the relation-to-itself of the being-for-itself [*Fürsichsein*] or irreflexive being in the logic of being, in fact implicitly harbours the relation-to-another which is rendered explicit when we enter the logic of essence, which is a pure logic of reflexion. Here we further find out that the truth of being is reflexion, that the immediacy of being in the beginning is only a mediated immediacy as it is posited by reflexion, and that the reflexionlessness of being in the beginning is thus a posited or reflected reflexionlessness. ‘*Das Sein ist überhaupt nur das Werden zum Wesen*’ – being is only the becoming towards essence. (HW VI 116)

As the retrogressive grounding of the logic proceeds now in the logic of essence, we find out that the ground for the self-determination of being is that being is always already reflected and thus not just in-itself [*Ansichsein*] but also posited [*Gesetztsein*], which is why the truth of being, as the truth of reflexion, is expressed by what Hegel calls the speculative proposition – the ‘hidden necessity’ of a ‘movement’ inherent in reflexion that in turn stems from the tension between the form of reflexion (or the form of a given proposition of reflexion) and the content of reflexion. (HW VI 44) The speculative proposition is the central technical innovation of Hegel’s logic and thus of all of Hegel’s philosophy. Directed against what Hegel calls the thought of the understanding (the thought which sees itself as opposed to a world of objects and determines these objects rigidly by attributing properties to them, or what in the *Encyclopaedia* Hegel also calls the first position of thought towards objectivity, denoting the type of thinking of dogmatic metaphysics but also of any dogmatically determining thinking in general), the speculative proposition is what Hegel understands as the truly speculative and philosophical thinking of reason. Unlike the understanding, reason does not fix properties to objects it denotes but rather grasps the fluidity of determinations and the inherently unstable and shifting position of the determining and the determined, or of the subject and the predicate to use the traditional logical terms. Due to this fluidity, there is a tension between the form of a proposition, which says that a subject called A is a determination called B, and the content of the proposition, which says that in some regard A is to be understood as B, but not that A and B are one and the same (the identity of A and B is mediated by the copula *is*).

While a (dogmatic) proposition of simple identity collapses the distinction between form and content, the speculative proposition sustains the antagonistic tension in the unity of form and content by giving up the fixed positions of subject and predicate and following through the shifting meanings of the assumption of changing positions within the proposition.⁴⁰ This is why Hegel says in the *Preface* to the *Phenomenology* that thought ‘loses its solid objective ground’ [*seinen festen gegenständlichen Boden*] (HW III 60) – we can say that thought loses its ὑποκείμενον or substratum in the classical meaning of the term subject, and hovers ungrounded, stabilising itself only in an immanent manner through the movement of circularity between the shifting positions of its own movement. This self-circling movement between being in-itself and position (between Hölderlin’s *Seyn* and Fichte’s *Setzen*) is the reflexion of being and at once the truth of being, as it ‘gives itself to the life of the object’ [*dem Leben des Gegenstandes*] and has ‘the inner necessity of the latter in view and utters it.’ (HW III 52) In the *Preface* to the *Phenomenology* Hegel uses the proposition ‘God is being’ [*Gott ist das Sein*] as an example to illustrate the speculative proposition, according to which God and being are not immediately the same but rather being or to be is the essence of God, from which position one would, in a speculative movement of thought, continue to think being from this point of view of being the essence of God and would thus generate a new

⁴⁰ The philosophical poverty of contemporary logic stems precisely from the obliteration of the speculative logical tension between form and content through an elimination of content and reduction to form in logical thought, following the formalist revolution of logic in the wake of Frege and the logical positivists. In the extreme formalism of dominant contemporary mathematical logic the so called ‘truth content’ of a proposition is not a matter for logic at all but for empirical observation whereas thought only cares about the modalities of the logical statement itself, thus universally reverting to the kind of trivial concept of truth which Hegel destroys already in the first pages of the *Phenomenology*. The crisis of formalism – connected to the crisis in the foundations of mathematics – of the early and mid-20th century is precisely the result of the reduction of truth to form, entangling formal logic in the long series of logical paradoxes (Russell, Burali Forte, Gödel, etc.) which cannot be conclusively resolved within the strictly formalist program (despite attempts like Russell’s type theory or Kripke’s metalanguage) and have interestingly found their most promising response through a transformation of this very program by the reintroduction of logical content into form, or rather of the paradox of content into the laws of form, in the work of George Spencer-Brown, which in many ways resembles the foundational speculative logic of German Idealism in Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre*.

position. (HW III 59) The example that Hegel chooses is not at all fortuitous as we have already passed through the first step in our reconstruction of Hegel's superior ontological proof of God.

2) Continuing to the second momentum, we now find that what generates the movement within reflexion and within the speculative proposition, is the contradiction. What in the logic of being were the simple determinations of the categories, appear from the vantage point of the logic of essence now as what can be called reflexion-determinations [*Reflexionsbestimmungen*] since the truth of being has been retroactively determined as reflexion.⁴¹ Articulated at a higher level of reflexion than the simple categorical determinations, the reflexion-determinations contain in themselves the circular form of self-reference which has been identified as the form of the speculative proposition and which allows the reflexion-determinations to contain the ground of their own form within themselves – while the simple determinations were one-sided and would 'each stand immediately opposed to their other' or to their own opposite (HW VI 37). The inability to ground themselves is why the simple determinations must perish into the ground or *zugrunde*

⁴¹ From this perspective of the truth of being we can tell that the reflexion of sheer being can be grasped as 'reflexion-in-others', while the more deeply introverted reflexions of essence are of the type of a 'reflexion-in-itself' – the first order of reflexion is the thought of being, while the second order of reflexion is the thought of thought. Now, perhaps the most daring feat of the *Science of Logic* is the attempt to unite first and second order reflexion in a third order reflexion – the logic of the concept – which is supposedly the thought of the thought of being, or what the 20th century philosopher, logician and cyberneticist Gotthard Günther calls the 'reflexion-in-itself of reflexion-in-others and reflexion-in-itself'. As the seminal work of Günther demonstrates at great length, Hegel may have lacked the technical means to adequately articulate this third order of reflexion as – disregarding Hegel's own strong anti-mathematical affect – the gridwork of speculative logic can be amplified through (non-formalist and non-reductive) formalisation, for which purpose Günther 'polycontextural logic' deploys means close to those of polyvalent logic and fuzzy mathematics as elements of a speculative philosophy of the 'ontological places of truth' (see *Idee und Grundriss einer nicht-Aristotelischen Logik* of 1959). As we will see in the following, and as Günther himself elaborates in a number of articles, the combination of formalisation and speculation has an important historical forerunner in Schelling, who was less averse to formalisation than Hegel without being any less speculative.

gehen. It is the immanent inherence of the laws of their own form which allows the reflexion-determinations – Hegel names them identity, difference and contradiction – to take the place of what had been the universal laws of thought. [*die allgemeinen Denkgesetze*] (HW VI 36-38)

We are here at a crucial junction of Hegel's elevation of thought into the superior ontological proof. In their classical form the laws of thought are devised and codified by Aristotle (not just in their form as syllogisms but especially as metaphysical doctrines) to form the trinitarian axiomatic of the principle of identity [metaphysically: an entity is identical to itself, formal-logically: $A \rightarrow A$], the principle of non-contradiction [metaphysically: an entity can not *be* and *not be*, formal-logically: $\neg (A \wedge \neg A)$], and the principle of the excluded middle or the tertium non datur [metaphysically: an entity must either be or not be, there is no third option in between, formal-logically: $A \vee \neg A$]. This triplet is generally supplemented by Leibniz' principle of sufficient reason [everything that is, is metaphysically necessary or grounded, known to Kant and the post-Kantians as *der Satz vom Grunde* or as the *nihil est sine ratione* of Wolff and Baumgarten]. We know that Kant accepts the three Aristotelian laws of thought – technically refined by Islamic, Scholastic and Port-Royal logicians but never fundamentally recast – as inherited essentially unchanged (AA B VIII) and we know that Kant accepts them without further deduction as the general laws of anything that can be thought at all – that is, as the laws of what Kant calls general (not transcendental) logic. (AA A59-A61/B84-B85) Yet in Kant there are two important differences with regards to the tradition. Firstly, while for Aristotle the laws of thought are immediately metaphysical laws which determine the structure of reality – foremost of which: the principle of non-contradiction, see *Metaphysics* 1005b35, 1006a, 1008b2 (Aristotle 1989) – in Kant general logic is no more than 'a propaedeutic, as it were, merely the vestibule of science' (AA B IX), while the true philosophical science which tells us what we can know about reality is to be sought in the higher order reflexions of transcendental logic.⁴² Secondly, while Kant accepts the three

⁴² We can say that while generally classical thought is an immediate thought of being, with Kant thought is self-reflexively intensified into a thought of thought. The question for Hegel and Schelling is then how this thought of thought relates to being – a question with an only unsatisfactory answer in Kant. Schematically, we can say that while Hegel develops in his philosophy a thought of the thought of being (the essence which steps into existence), the mature Schelling develops in his the being of the thought of thought (the existence which sustains essence). To continue the thread of the footnotes on formal logic briefly, it can be

Aristotelian laws of thought as formal requirements of all coherent thinking, he rejects the principle of sufficient reason in so far as the latter is taken as a metaphysical principle.

Already in the *Nova dilucidatio* of 1755 Kant states that the principle of sufficient reason can only have validity as an epistemological principle, or insofar as it demands a sufficient reason for every cognition, but cannot have any metaphysical validity since that would require the formal and not only material necessity of the ontological proof of God – which we have discussed above. The only thing that could formally guarantee that everything that exists is absolutely necessary, would be the necessary existence of God as the final ground of everything, but the whole point of Kant's formal destruction of the ontological proof is that there is no final *Grund* for thought but only (the intimation and anticipation of) an *Abgrund*. (AA I 408) We can now understand how Hegel is able to reverse the Kantian position by disbanding the absolute validity of the three laws of thought precisely in order to save the principle of sufficient reason. Hegel argues that if taken as 'absolute' (which Kant of course does not do – but which Hegel can demand since he takes the truth of being to be reflexion) then the laws are 'opposed to each other, they contradict and sublate each other' (HW VI 38) which in turn we may logically reconstruct – (diverging from Hegel's own presentation) – as such: the principle of identity demands that $A = A$. Since we are in the speculative proposition we are able to think that while formally both sides of the proposition are the same, in the regard of the content the first A (*as* first element) is different to the second A (*as* second element), which means that in this regard there is also a contradiction of the two sides.⁴³ But

said that modern formalist logic reverts back to a thought of being and loses the depth of reflexivity brought to an unprecedented and, to this day, unreached apex by Kant, Fichte, Hegel and Schelling. A contemporary critique of formal logic which would not want to simply reject the latter as a non-thinking in line with the general anti-mathematical affect of post-Heideggerian philosophy, but which would rather seek to mediate between the insights of contemporary logic and the higher order of reflexion of speculative thought, or precisely seek to develop a corresponding transcendental logic, could begin its operation through an interpretation of modern formalism as based on an amphiboly of reflexion. (see AA A262-A263/B318-B319)

⁴³ The paradigmatic place of the immanent deduction of the laws of thought out of the movement of thought itself lies in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1794 which produces the three principles in its very first three paragraphs, however starting from a primary principle which is 'absolutely-first, unconditional simpliciter' and which 'can neither be proved nor

since we have both identity and contradiction at once, we have also a third option or a tertium datur beyond the two straight-forward options of either identity or contradiction.

The mutual 'contradiction and sublation' of these momenta is not a prohibitive problem, on the contrary since thought is grasped as nothing but the self-negating circularity of the speculative proposition, and in turn the reflexion of being is the truth of being, the contradiction emerges as 'the principle of all self-movement' and 'the root of all life and all movement' which invests 'drive and activity' into being. (HW VI 75-76) This is why the contradiction is based in objective being and not in the subjective being of the concept (the second and not the third part of the *Science of Logic*) – it will take the contradiction, inherent in reflexion, not only to propel essence into existence and God into being, but the very unfolding of spirit into the cosmos and the universal life process. The step through which the reflexions of essence enter into existence (the material accomplishment of the ontological proof) can be exactly specified. It is the step which occurs in the chapter on the category of the ground, and more precisely the transition from the complete ground to the condition. But the contradiction must be so that the ground can be. Only when all things have been so thoroughly negated, when it can be said that 'all things are in themselves contradictory' (HW VI 74) can all things *zugrunde gehen* – perish and go into their ground – so that 'everything has its sufficient reason.'⁴⁴ (HW VI 82) And only when a thing is so thoroughly and

determined, if it shall be absolutely-first' (*Wissenschaftslehre*, § 1, GA I 2 255) and must rather be taken as a decision of self-positing, given which it will be possible to deduce in strict logical succession the necessary parameters of thought. While large parts of the *Science of Logic* can be read as a restatement of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, Hegel's whole endeavor also aims at purging the momentum of decision and the derivative deontological imperative on which Fichte's philosophy is based from the deduction of thought. Schelling's new presentations of the deduction of thought on the other hand, as in the *Stuttgart Private Lectures* or in the *Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, far from seeking to eliminate the foundational Fichtean principle of decision, on the contrary seek to grasp it as a transreflexive and cosmological fact.

⁴⁴ The category of contradiction leads directly into the category of the ground, the principle of contradiction directly into the principle of sufficient reason, corroborating our thesis that while Kant safeguards the stability of thought by sacrificing its integrity, Hegel reclaims the integrity of thought (its ability to think the whole of being) precisely by abandoning its stability (the stability of the laws of thought). Hence the profoundly dizzying experience of

exhaustively grounded that its real conditions are given, can the thing emerge out of the ground and step into existence – ‚*Die Sache geht aus dem Grunde hervor.*‘ (HW VI 122) As we have already noted, the ontological proof of God is present throughout the entire Hegelian logic, it is the real subtext of the *Science of Logic*, its purpose and *raison d'être*. The step from ground into existence, powered by the movement of contradiction, is explained by Hegel thus:

‘About the *ontological proof of the existence of God* it was already remembered that the determination which is posited as the ground is the *complexus of all realities* [*dass die darin zugrunde gelegte Bestimmung der Inbegriff aller Realitäten ist*]. Of this determination it is usually first shown, that it is *possible*, because it contains no *contradiction*, in that the reality is only taken as reality without boundaries. It was remembered that this complexus is thus taken as the simple undetermined being or, if the realities are taken in fact as multiple determinates, it becomes the complexus of all negations. Is the distinction of reality taken further, it turns from difference to opposite and thus to contradiction and the complexus of all realities at all [*der Inbegriff aller Realitäten überhaupt*] becomes the absolute contradiction in itself. The common *horror*, which the representing, not speculative thought has of contradiction – like nature of the *vacuum* – discards this consequence, because it remains in the one-sided observation of the *resolution* of the contradiction into nothing, and does not cognise the positive side of the latter, according to which it becomes *absolute activity* and absolute ground.’ (HW VI 78)

Kant takes the all of reality only as a function of reason or a heuristic universal operation through which reality is constructed – as Schelling says ‘Kant does not at all suppose that the

being inside the *Logic* – this ‘logical exstasy’ as Schelling calls it (PP 228) – a space in which thought is entirely fluid, devoid of boundaries, grounds or external references, and circles only in its own ether to eventually prove that its infinite circling has exhausted the totality of being. Hegel ascribes Kant’s protection of stability to an excessive ‘tenderness for the worldly things’ (*Enc.*, § 48, HW VIII 127, similarly also in the *Science of Logic*, HW V 276 and in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* HW XX 359) which seems to shy away from declaring the world itself to be non-identical and contradictory and instead sees contradiction simply as an error of thought. However, one could well respond that it may actually take more courage and even a certain intellectual violence to allow a veritable outside of thought, and an even stronger thought able to sustain an unbridgeable abyss between itself and the world.

complexus of possibilities would be [*daß der Inbegriff aller Möglichkeiten sey*]. The original intention of reason, he says, was merely and solely, to be able to represent the thorough-going determination of things; to this end the concept of all reality suffices, without justifying our demand that all this reality be objectively given.' (SW XI 285) But if this operation that, as we remember, poses all possible predicates against a thing so that from each predicate the non-applying is eliminated, is taken as an absolute (which is Hegel's general posture, as we have seen with regards to the laws of thought) then the all of reality will in fact be the 'complexus of all negations' and the 'absolute contradiction' – that which opposes the contradictory to anything and everything. Hegel generally rejects the concept of the complexus of all realities, or of all possibilities, as a primitive and weak concept, a remnant of the naïve metaphysics of the first order of reflexion which does not go beyond comparing and attributing predicates rigidly. But as the superior ontological proof of the *Science of Logic* proceeds, we are also led through a determinate negation of the complexus of all realities and are led into what Hegel sees as the adequate conception of the Absolute for speculative reason. In this conception, the Absolute is not just something which grounds the finite and contingent things through opposing them as a master template for their predication, as it were, but rather the Absolute actually performs this opposition and this negation of everything contingent and finite, such that the ontological proof – expressed as a proposition – is no longer that 'the *being* of the finite is the being of the Absolute' but 'the *non-being* of the finite is the being of the Absolute.' (HW VI 80) The activation of contradiction as active movement within the absolutely intra-reflexive being is the activity and the ground of the universal process, of which Hegel says: 'Only when driven to the peak of contradiction, the multiple become active and alive against each other and receive in it the negativity which is the inherent pulsation and self-movement and vitality.' (HW VI 78)

3) We have reached the third and last phase of our reconstruction of Hegel's superior ontological proof. The crux of the labour is already accomplished. What remains is only to come to the realisation that this labour is a labour of the concept. As we have seen, looking back on the logic of being, reflexion retrospectively grasps the abstract and basic parameters of being as a first order reflexion (reflexion-in-others) which comes to its deeper and more introspective truth in the second order reflexion (reflexion-in-itself) of the logic of essence. Now, existence, or the stepping out of essence into being, is thus nothing more than the 'immediate unity of reflexion-in-itself and reflexion-in-others' (*Enc.* § 123, HW VIII 253) or the immediate unity of being and essence. As we have noted above, we can say that at this

point the ontological proof has already been accomplished materially, for as Hegel says ‘the essence has passed over into existence [*das Wesen ist in die Existenz übergegangen*]; existence is its absolute externalisation [*seine absolute Entäusserung*] beyond which it has not stayed behind. The proposition would now be: „essence is existence“; it is not different to its existence’ (HW VI 128) – which already amounts to a superior confirmation of the Anselmian and Cartesian argument for the necessary existence of essence in God. Yet in Hegel, when something is immediate, we are never wrong to guess that it is not yet fully developed and its higher truth is still to come. For existence, as immediate unity of being and essence, does not yet know itself as this unity, it is not yet a free and reflected unity (and it would seem that a free God and not a blind unity is required). This free and reflected unity is ‘absolute unity of being and reflexion’ which is the concept. (HW VI 246) While the first order of reflexion consists of the abstract determinations of being and the second order of reflexion negates these abstract determinations by entering deep into their ground and revealing the contradiction as the principle of movement and self-negation within them, the third order of reflexion – Hegel calls it also the ‘total reflexion’ (HW VI 278) – now again reflects on the relation between the first and the second order of reflexion and grasps them in their absolute unity. Thus we can say that this third order of reflexion, the order of the concept, is the reflexion which thinks being as and through the principle of movement in thought – it is what we call the thought of the thought of being, or what Hegel calls the ‘negation of the negation, hence the restored being [*das wiederhergestellte Sein*] but as the infinite mediation and negativity of the latter in itself.’ (HW VI 269)

It is here, in the order of the concept, that thought attains again the immediacy and reflexionlessness of being, however now infinitely mediated and reflected through itself, which is why the concept is at once concrete and universal. The third order of reflexion is folded back, as it were, into the first order, creating the great circle which makes up the Hegelian logic, taking the form of ‘circle of circles’ in which the idea of the whole, or the method of the whole, also appears in each element. Maximising the Fichtean circularity in foundation while apparently sublating its momentum of decision and position, this movement of the loop, returning into the beginning and generating the circular form, is essential for the Hegelian logic as it is the way in which the externally ungrounded or wholly immanent movement can produce a self-sustained and self-sufficient whole. (*Enc.* 15 HW VIII 60) The accomplished loop expresses itself or becomes explicit in the speculative concept which is as much being as essence, or the unreflected immediacy and its depth-reflexion, taken together

in a higher reflexion which is at once immediate and infinitely reflected. As the positivity which springs out of infinite self-negation (we can say: as the being which springs out of the thought of thought) Hegel's speculative concept is no longer what Kant understands by the concept. In Hegel's thinking, Kant's concept is an 'abstract identity' in which the opposition is omitted, it has not gone through the infinite self-negation of contradiction. (HW VI 126) This is why, according to Hegel, Kant's destruction of the ontological proof of God is deficient. We remember that Kant argued that the existence of God could not be extracted or gleaned (*ausgeklaut*) from its concept, just like the existence of 100 thalers could not be extracted from their concept. Hegel responds:

'But this so-called concept of hundred thalers is a false concept; the form of simple relation to itself does not belong to such limited, finite content itself; it is a form imposed on it and borrowed to it by subjective understanding; hundred thalers are not a self-relating, but a changeable and perishable. Thought or representation, which only envisages a determinate being, existence [*das Dasein*], is to be referred back to that mentioned beginning of science, which Parmenides made, who cleansed and elevated his representation and thus also the representation of subsequent time towards the pure thought, the being as such, and hence created the element of science.' (HW V 90-91)

Thus for Hegel, Kant commits a clear category mistake (one grave enough to qualify for Hegel as a 'barbarism', *Enc.* § 51 HW VIII 136) by taking the being-there of 100 thalers as a concept ontologically equivalent to the concept of God. While the former is to be verified by comparison with 'the context of my perception', (HW VI 402) the latter verifies itself speculatively (for Hegel this means non-empirically) once we enter into the movement of 'pure thought, the being as such' which is nothing but Hegel's superior (post-Kantian) articulation of a Neo-Parmenidean rationalist metaphysics. This is how Hegel completes and accomplishes the superior ontological proof. The *Science of Logic* generates not only a God who is indistinct from his function as absolute activity and absolute ground in the universal movement of self-negation, but with it, also a concept of the concept which is the inner being and the expression of this movement, such that the speculative concept 'is the absolute, divine concept itself' and the 'logical process would be the immediate presentation of the self-determination of God to being.' (HW VI 405) As we had surmised from the beginning, what really is philosophically at stake in the ontological proof of God, is not primarily the concept of the divine but the divinity of the concept. Accentuating the collapse of the activity and

actuality of God on the one hand, and the logical necessity of the concept on the other, implicit in Hegel's superior ontological proof of God, Schelling gives the true interpretation of the 'divine concept' as such: 'following this doctrine one would have to say not that God is a mere concept but rather the concept itself is God. One would have to say that the real creator is the concept, since the concept, which Hegel thinks as the subject of the movement, is not merely my concept, nor even the concept that God has but rather God himself.' (PP218) If we speak of a restitution of cosmic reason in Hegel it lies precisely in the ability of – radically destabilised, but hence also maximally expanded and empowered – reason, to command this divine concept as the true being of the cosmos and of all of existence.

Schelling's Ontological Proof of Chaos

We began with an introduction of Schelling's archaeological excavation of chaos as the suppressed other of a historically factitious reason, and then entered into the nexus Kant-Hegel-Schelling in order to reconstruct the systematic critique of cosmic reason which the adumbrated archaeological investigation supports and supplements. Now having sufficiently illuminated the critique of the ontological proof in Kant and the rearticulation of cosmic reason in Hegel, we are in a position to grasp both the stakes and the conceptual ground of Schelling's appropriation of this problematic. We enter into the last element of our groundwork: the superior destruction of Hegel's superior ontological proof of God by Schelling, and will work our way through this destruction down to the core of Schelling's post-critical metaphysics – the foundation of existential cosmology. Although Schelling's early philosophy already contains all the seeds of Schelling's anti- or rather counter-Hegelian metaphysics, the explicit critique of Hegel, framed specifically with regards to the ontological proof, is to be found only in the late lectures. For a superficial glance at these lectures it may seem as if the mature Schelling simply professes a return to Kant, albeit one strangely bolstered by eccentric theological, mythological and cosmogonic investigations. However, the true view is much more complicated. On the one hand Schelling always remained philosophically (if certainly not stylistically) much closer to Kant than Hegel ever was. On the other hand, the development of the mature Hegelian system made an immense impression on Schelling and forced him to explicate what had previously only been implicit in his thought, thus bringing to the fore a fundamental complicity with the Kantian position which had previously been hidden under the prominence of those aspects of Schelling's philosophy that explicitly go beyond Kant. In the late lecture, and more generally in his mature work, Schelling breaks radically not with his own early philosophy but rather with the interpretation of his early philosophy by Hegel – an interpretation which is not only amenable to integration (as a primitive precursor) into the Hegelian system, but which has also obstructed far too long the view on the originality of Schelling's position and the power of his arguments against Hegel.

As we have noted, the crux of his critique of Hegel takes the form of a superior destruction of the ontological proof. But the superior destruction is not just a return to a merely critical or negative Kantian position. Rather, sharing with Hegel the will to found a post-critical metaphysics and a new holographic cosmology based on the Kantian destruction of classical

metaphysics, yet critically opposed to the neo-rationalism of Hegel, in its final form Schelling's superior destruction can only be called a critical sublation of the Hegelian position (what we call a critical sublation is not the well known Hegelian sublation in which the sublated is perfectly preserved, but rather, following Schelling's conception of development as $\kappa\rho\acute{\iota}\sigma\iota\varsigma$ it is a sublation in which something is left behind due to the action of a scission or decision). In the last instance, it is hence the sublation of Hegel which allows Schelling to produce a higher speculative interpretation of Kant.⁴⁵ We will present the crux of this operation – delivered largely by Schelling in the Munich and Berlin lectures between 1832 and 1845 – as the ground of our own rearticulation of existential cosmology.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ This was already argued in the pioneering work which initiated in 1955, after almost a century of silence and misunderstanding, the contemporary discovery of Schelling: *Die Vollendung des Deutschen Idealismus in Schelling Spätphilosophie* (the *Completion of German Idealism in the Late Philosophy of Schelling*) by the eminent German philosopher Werner Schulz. (Schulz 1986) Schulz' book argues that the theoretical apex of German Idealism is not to be found in Hegel's system as commonly supposed but rather in the late philosophy of Schelling. The debate among scholars of German Idealism on this thesis is still ongoing. Grouping some (by far not all) important readings broadly together we can say that while Jürgen Habermas and 'the Marxist Schelling' Ernst Bloch (according to Habermas 1987) opt for a reading of Schelling's late philosophy as the final aporia of German Idealism which must be lead out of its own inconsistencies through activating its already implicit materialism, (especially Habermas 1978, and Bloch, 1985) more recent commentators like Jean- François Courtine (Courtine 1990) and Manfred Frank (Frank 1988) have developed a view of the late Schelling as the critical sublation of German Idealism and thinker of an absolutely contemporary post-idealist philosophy of facticity.

⁴⁶ The relevant texts consist of fully explicated lecture notes as well as a full lecture transcript by a student of Schelling, thus providing accurate and reliable sources despite never having been intended for publication. The decisive texts are here the *Grounding of Positive Philosophy* of 1832/1833, and *On the History of modern Philosophy* of 1836/1837, both given in Munich, as well as the *Philosophical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* given between 1847 and 1852, and the *Philosophy of Revelation* which exists in the transcript of Paulus of 1841/1842 (there is also a partial but highly interesting transcript of these lectures by Søren Kierkegaard, Schelling's student at the time) and as Schelling's own notes which date from different years, between Munich and Berlin. While much formidable continental research on German Idealism problematises Schelling's last lectures in Berlin, they remain to

Hegel's philosophy promises to seamlessly deduce the universe, all of reality and existence, out of one great movement of thought, driven by nothing but the immanent necessity to go beyond the contradictions inherent in the categories in which being presents itself. The precondition for the success of this move is the collapse of the transcendental and the factual or existential level such that the categories are no longer the conditions of being but being itself. This is the core of what has been called Hegel's panlogicism. As we have seen, the justification for the collapse of the transcendental and the existential is delivered by the superior ontological proof of God, which in Hegel, is no longer a formal argument but – through the rearticulation of logic as ontology of content based on the speculative proposition – is itself the performance of cosmic reason, producing all the positions of being from pure abstraction to the concrete unfolding of the universe, in its own process. The seemingly simple question posed by Schelling is: why is this process? The augmented ontological proof of Hegel as self-grounding logical loop, is able to ground everything and anything within it in the 'circle of circles, because every single element, as animated by the method, is the reflexion-in-itself, which by return into the beginning, is at once the beginning of a new element.' (HW VI 571) But is the entire process able to ground itself such that there can be no outside to it? Schelling responds:

‘What must draw our entire attention to it is the claim in Hegel's system that logic is the foundation of *all* speculative philosophy. For this, preferably the general point is given that all which is, is in the idea or in the logical concept, and that thus this idea is the truth of all, in which truth all returns at once as its beginning and as its end. Regarding these arguments, it could well be granted that all is in the logical idea, since indeed the senseless can nowhere exist; but it is a necessary question: why is there sense at all, why is there not non-sense instead of sense? With this very reflexion the logical presents

this date largely untranslated into English (only the *Historical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* has been translated, the *Philosophical Introduction*, and the *Philosophy of Mythology* itself, as well as the whole of the *Philosophy of Revelation* have not been translated). While translation are underway currently, the Anglophone reception of Schelling's late thought remains understandably scant, with singular exceptions like the work of Edward Allen Beech (Beech 1994) Andrew Bowie (Bowie 1994). Thus much of the material in our discussion has – to my knowledge – neither been translated nor discussed in English before.

itself as the negative, as that, *without* which nothing could exist, as e.g. in the sensuous world all is comprehended in measure and number, yet therefore mathematics is not already the explanation of the world. As it were, the whole world lies caught within the nets of reason, but the question is: how did it get into this net?' (PP 222)

In the Hegelian logic – as in any rationalist metaphysics – the whole world lies caught within the nets of reason, yet the question remains how it got into this net. While the circulation of the Hegelian concept can ground itself internally and immanently, and due to its corrosive and integrative power is able to negate and sublate any opposition to it (hence the extraordinary resilience of Hegelian philosophy, any position that is taken against it directly – say from the point of view of life, time, history, existence or difference – can be dialectically shown to be yet another one-sided or insufficiently developed momentum of the whole, and can be integrated) it cannot from within itself attest for the non-facticity of itself. While absolute reflexion is able to prove its own necessity, it is not able to prove the necessity of this necessity, or of how the world got caught within the nets of reason. The very existence of reason, according to Schelling, cannot be deduced a priori but must be taken as a contingent, historical fact. In absence of such an external grounding in real facticity, the logical spirals of the concept can not reach out of the sphere of thought and into existence, and can hence not be more than a reproduction of the artificially generated illusory *Scheinwissen* of the Eleatics:

'In order to give the concept a movement Hegel must thus return within it to some beginning where it is *not* yet what it shall become; he must return to the most negative beginning, which is determined such: it is the concept that is as free as possible of any subjective determination. It is not claimed that the concept has ever been this most negative, it is also not claimed that the concept actually progresses from this beginning, the momenta of the movement are not to be found in it as the momenta of an *actual* movement. Thus the movement of the concept is also not to be thought as one that actually happened and one that is actually objective. The supposed movement is only that vertiginous [*Das Schwindelerregende*] movement which Aristotle ascribes to the Eleatics, and this whole philosophy is nothing but a methodically refreshed Eleaticism, for the illusion of a new life.' (PP 218)

If post-critical metaphysics is to find a solid ground on which to base its ideas of cosmos and existence, this ground can not be the self-enclosed and self-sufficient circulation of a reason

beyond which and before which an unreason (such as life, time, history, existence or difference) could always be thought, even if not without already integrating it into superior reason. The solid ground must be sought somewhere else, even if it turns out to be anything but a solid ground – an *Abgrund*, a chaos. The way to Schelling's foundation for post-critical metaphysical leads through a superior destruction of Hegel's ontological proof which we can tentatively summarise as such: it is demonstrated that the transition from essence to existence in the Hegelian logic has the structure of a *Scheinwissen* (the knowledge of a *Schein* which is not a *Sein*), or of a transcendental illusion to speak Kantian. Accordingly, although the movement of thought does indeed grasp the essence of reality, it is merely the deceptive semblance of logical necessity which leads the concept from essence into existence. What in fact enforces this leap is a veiled philosophical decision (which amounts to Schelling's observation of Hegel's failure to excise or sublimate the Fichtean momentum of decision from foundation). Once the transcendental illusion has been revealed and superior reason has been repelled back into the merely essential and the negative, the surviving facticity of the decision for existence and for the positive now appears as the principle of a historical and existential philosophy in which an extra-logical facticity is speculatively apprehended. Returning to a new and higher interpretation of the ontological proof of God, the newfound principle figures as the negative logical necessity of an absolute positive contingency. In this Schellingian form, what in Kant was merely a negative possibility of thought, becomes now a positive ontological proof of chaos. With this last move, the foundation for a post-critical metaphysics has been laid which Schelling calls metaphysical empiricism or superior empiricism.

We begin by entering, with Schelling, into the critique of the transcendental illusion of transition from essence to existence which is the constitutive condition of Hegel's ontological proof. As we saw above, Hegel's superior ontological proof rests on the comprehension of being as reflexion which retrospectively or rather retrogressively extends from the logic of essence back to the abstract being of the beginning. But this later reinscription does not come as an unexpected surprise since the being of the beginning had already been grasped as the proto-form of reflexion, namely as pure relation to itself. Let us remember that both Hegel and Schelling originally set out from Hölderlin's *Seyn*, the necessity of a *Seyn schlechthin* (a unity of being simpliciter) before and outside of all judgment. Hölderlin's point is here that the unity of subject and object which in Fichte's notion of intellectual intuition is grasped as identity, is not yet itself being but is only the product or result of an absolute unity of being outside of this reflexion since without it the *Urtheil* (primal scission) of self-consciousness

(through which the latter experiences itself as a subject posited against the object, and which is overcome or cancelled in intellectual intuition) would have no real ground or would be merely a fabrication of self-consciousness. Now *Seyn* is not posited as something ontologically known – Hölderlin is a post-Kantian after all, and the direct and immediate return to a positive being would be merely a return to dogmatic metaphysics – but rather, for Hölderlin, it must be taken as a purely negative necessity of thought about which nothing can be said or thought apart from precisely the impossibility of determining it in any way.

Thus *Seyn* is immutable, immobile, immediate and atemporal and as such *Seyn* is irreflexive.⁴⁷ Until here Schelling and Hegel would agree. But Hegel precisely sets in by grasping the irreflexive or ‘reflexionless’ being as the simple and abstract relation to itself by which the *Science of Logic* begins. As he argues, that which is without all relation must at least be related to itself. This move, which Hegel grapples with at great length in the introductory essay on the beginning, is what makes the abstract being of the beginning the ‘grounding which is present and maintains itself in all following developments, [*die in allen folgenden Entwicklungen gegenwärtige und sich erhaltende Grundlage*] that which remains thoroughly immanent to its further determinations’, namely the abstract relation, which as the relating activity of relata is simply the activity of thought or even the definition of thought. [HW V 71] This is why in the very beginning we are already in the concept or thought of being. To this, Schelling says: ‘If we want some being outside of thought [*etwas außer dem Denken Seyendes*], we must start from a being [*einem Seyn*] that is absolutely independent of all thought, that precedes all thought. Of this being, the Hegelian philosophy knows nothing, for this concept it has no place.’ (SW XIII 164) The seed for the transcendental illusion of transition from essence to existence is hence already planted in the conception of the reflexionless being as abstract self-relation – the first category of being is already saying too much about being, either it must call itself ‘the thought of being’ or it must drop even the thought of the self-relation if it is truly to be ‘being, nothing but being’. Of course Hegel would respond that to speak of being always means to think it, and that hence to speak of a being before or outside all thought, is self-refuting and, even worse, would just be a return to

⁴⁷ Thus there is a purely negative relation of thought to *Seyn*, a conception which can be seen as transcendental-logical rearticulation of the Platonic *via negativa* in which only negative statements can be made about the One, based on the Plotinian interpretation of the hypothesis I of Plato’s *Parmenides* as the grounding of apophatic or negative theology – *Enneads* VI, 9, 1-6. (Plotinus 1990a)

the Kantian problem of the thing-in-itself, which in being thought as a thing-in-itself has already been thought and is no longer outside of thought. But for Schelling and Hölderlin, it is precisely the point of this *Seyn schlechthin* that it cannot be appropriated by thought, or that it can only be thought paradoxically as a non-logical and extra-conceptual being. Schelling says about this being in the Munich lectures of 1832:

‘Thus philosophy needs the *actual* opposition right in the beginning. Nothing is easier than posing oneself into pure thought, but it is not as easy to get out of it again. The world consists not of mere categories or pure concepts, it does not consist of concrete *concepts*, but of concrete and contingent things, and the unlogical, that other, which is *not* the concept, but its opposite, which takes on the concept only unwillingly, as it were, is what it is about. Here philosophy has to stand its test. Hic Rhodus, hic salta.’ (PP 225)

And in the Berlin lectures of 1844 Schelling adds that the beginning must be thought as

‘a true opposition, a true dissonance, and thus one comprehends a potentiation [*eine Steigerung*]’ but ‘there (in the Hegelian philosophy) the point of beginning relates to the following as a mere minus, a lack, an emptiness, which is filled and is hence sublated as an emptiness, but there is just as much to overcome, [*zu überwinden*] as in the filling of an empty container; everything goes on peacefully – between being and nothing there is no opposition, [*kein Gegensatz*] they do not hurt each other.’ (SW X 137)

We see here the crux of the problem. Of course Hegel immediately thinks an opposition to being, namely the nothing. But the nothing that Hegel opposes to being is thought as a sheer emptiness and indeterminacy, and hence turns out to be identical to the abstract being, paving the way for the further smooth transition of categories. Schelling objects with a severe disputation of the meaning of being and nothing. Between Hegelian being and nothing there is no opposition (that is to say there is no contrary or antagonistic opposition but only a sublated contradiction), no resistance between them, and the whole ensuing development proceeds ‘like the filling of an empty container’, it is not ‘an actual process’ but a ‘mere thought process’ (Pa 224).⁴⁸ As we have noted, Schelling’s general aim is to purge metaphysics of its

⁴⁸ Thus Schelling injects polemically, that to call the ‘dialectical progression, in which there is no battle, but only a monotonous, almost sedative succession’ a *process* ‘belongs to the

rationalist excess, its panlogistic birth defect, which is revived in a post-critical articulation in Hegel's reduction of being to logical being and of process to thought-process. For this purpose, Schelling's vast body of late lectures return to the Greek foundation of metaphysics in both archaeological investigations and in sustained and protracted dialogues with Plato and Aristotle. From this ongoing work, Schelling extracts and reintroduces the ancient distinctions between τὸ ὄν (the mere being, *das Sein*), ὄντος ὄν (being in the emphatic sense, or Being, *das Seiende*), μὴ ὄν (the relative non-Being, *das Nichtseiende*) and οὐκ ὄν (the absolute non-being or Nothing, *Nichtsein*) (PP 136 ff., PP 409 ff., and SW XI-XIII passim).⁴⁹ The chief source of conceptual distinction between these kinds of being is the Platonic ontology of the *Sophistes* which Schelling reintroduces forcefully into the post-Kantian context.⁵⁰

misuse of words, which in Hegel is a great means of hiding a lack of true life.' (SW X 137) As we will see, the matter will ultimately come down here to Hegel's sublation of time into the logical process whereby there is no more ontological distinction between what Schelling will call noetic time and real time – from this perspective the designation of Hegel's philosophy as a process philosophy is hence radically misplaced.

⁴⁹ These terms are notoriously difficult to translate into English as the English 'being' levels all distinctions between *Sein* and *Seiendes*, *l'être* and *l'étant*, which we will either render as mere being (*Sein*), the emphatic being (*das Seiende*), the relative non-being (*das Nichtseiende*), and the absolute non-being or nothing (*das Nichtsein*), or continue to refer to in the Greek or German. Note however that, insofar as for Schelling there is an ontological difference between *Sein* and *das Seiende*, this is not at all the Heideggerian difference. On the contrary, for Schelling, *Sein* is the empty and abstract objectivity while *das Seiende* is a sheer and full existence, as we will see in greater detail. The distinction between ontic and ontological would be misplaced and would miss the original content of Schelling's thought.

⁵⁰ This is why Schelling insists on Plato's *Sophistes* as 'the true initiation to the higher science'. (SW XI 393) The *Sophistes* introduces the μὴ ὄν or the meontic being as a solution to the problem of 'λόγοις φαντάσματα', (*Sop.*, 234e) the speech on that which is not the truth, but is yet real in that it has an effect or power, including all speech on 'εἴτε εἰδῶλων εἴτε εἰκόνων εἴτε μιμημάτων εἴτε φαντασμάτων αὐτῶν', (*Sop.* 241e) which in turn makes possible the parricidal overcoming of the Parmenidean injunction against the thought of non-being. (*Sop.* 241d) Interestingly, and very tellingly, Hegel mentions only the οὐκ ὄν in his reading of the *Sophistes* in the *History of Philosophy* (HW XIX 70) and also never

Among these concepts of being, Hegel only truly has the τὸ ὂν and the οὐκ ὂν which are the being and the nothing of the beginning of the *Science of Logic*, that is, the being which is a mere being or an abstract and empty being, and the nothing which is in no way at all and thus an empty and abstract nothing. These two are direct and immediate contradictories and, in Hegel's purely intra-reflexive treatment of contradiction, pass into each other without resistance. About the τὸ ὂν which Hegel has captured in the abstract beginning, Schelling says that 'Parmenides already had the τὸ ὂν as principle... The mere ὂν is mere unity, because it is in all kinds and forms of being always the same.' (PP 412) On the other hand 'that ὂν which is itself posited as being, is the real [*der eigentliche*], the highest concept. We want the ὄντως ὂν which IS in the mode of being [*welches seienderweise Ist*]. (ibid) What philosophy wills and wants is the ὄντως ὂν (see *Sop.* 240b), the eminent or emphatic being, which is actively and thus also subjectively and not merely substantially, to use Hegelian terms. Hegel's being of the beginning as the abstract ὂν, as we have seen, is not the extra-reflexive *Sein* which was demanded as an outside of reflexion which would be an access to the positive being, but rather it is a kind of proto-reflexive and purely negative being in the form of empty self-relation, equal in this regard to the οὐκ ὂν or nothing, to which it is immediately conjoined in the *Logic*. The transition proceeds smoothly from being into nothing any beyond, as from the very beginning the thought of being is moving within its own ether – crucially marked by an absence or complete sublation of a creative and extra-logical time – as it were, like in the vacuum in which the dove may think it can fly faster.

But by having posited itself from the beginning into the timeless ether of thought, the empty being has no capacity to acquire out of its own movement the richness of the existing universe, or of the being which IS in the emphatic or positive sense. Yet it is clear that Hegel wants and wills the ὄντως ὂν too, as the *Logic* proceeds towards this positive and differentiated being, the concrete being of the Absolute as Hegel would say. In fact the whole point of the *Science of Logic* is that, in the course of its unfolding, the entirely negative being

mentions the μὴ ὂν anywhere else in the entire section on ancient philosophy, except once when directly quoting a passage from Plotinus, corroborating the fact that Hegel makes no ontological distinction between μὴ ὂν and οὐκ ὂν, or rather reduces both to the latter since the logical reduction of being does not leave space to a non-being which, like the μὴ ὂν, could not be simply comprehended as the contradictory opposite of being.

of the beginning acquires existence and positivity, as we have seen above. However, the constitutive illusion of the *Logic* is that this transition could happen without any will and decision, as it were, entirely out of the logically necessary self-movement of the concept. It is precisely the logical necessity of the transition which Schelling vehemently disputes. Speculatively continuing a line of thought begun in Kant's 1763 essay on the ontological proof and continued through Hölderlin's essay on judgment and being of 1795, Schelling insists that, being, sheer being, must be thought as absolute position, that is, as something which precedes all possibility and all thought, and can thus not be thought without the character of facticity and decision. The ὄντως ὄν is what philosophy *wills*. Now, this will to the concrete and the existing is also what drives Hegel's logic as an unacknowledged subterranean force. But the unacknowledged can not remain hidden. Thus the decision for existence shows itself, inadvertently and against the will of the author, at key junctures in the journey of development of the logical ideal: the step from essence into existence, and then again in the potentiated repetition of this move, in the step from idea into nature. In the preface to a work of Victor Cousins, written in 1834, Schelling notes polemically about this latter *Entäusserung* (externalisation) in which the idea discharges or ejects itself ('daß die Idee sich selbst *frei entläßt*', HW VI 573):

'The logical self-movement of the concept (and what a concept!) endured for as long as the system proceeded within the merely logical; as soon as it had to do the difficult step into actuality, the thread of dialectical movement entirely breaks off; a second hypothesis becomes necessary, namely that it happens upon the idea, one does not know why if not to interrupt the boredom of its merely logical being, to decompose into its elements through which nature is supposed to emerge.' (SW X 213)⁵¹

⁵¹ Generally the Schellingian *Hegelkritik* is the first and – arguably, until this day the most philosophically sophisticated – critique of Hegel and as thus the true aperture of post-idealist philosophy. No single work has demonstrated this unique position of Schelling more stringently than Frank's *Der Unendliche Mangel an Sein*, which has unfortunately still not been translated into English. Frank demonstrates not just that Schelling's philosophical decisions are of fundamental importance for the post-idealist currents, but also that the central pillars of the critique of idealism in thinkers like Feuerbach, Kierkegaard, Marx, Engels and Bakunin, are in fact directly derived from Schelling where virtually all of them (the primacy of nature, existence and decision, the reversal of subject and predicate in Hegel, the anthropological grounding of logic, creative time vs. the eternalisation of the logic, etc.) are

Apart from the satirical evocation of boredom, there is no reason or ground, that is, none which would conform to the demand of the *Science of Logic* to strictly proceed only out of logical necessity and under subtraction of any element of decision or subjective intervention by the philosopher, for the idea which has supposedly already reached its summit and its most concrete and full expression in the absolute idea, to now impurify itself by discharging into nature in order to run through the forms of concrete and actual existence. In a lecture entitled *On the Source of Eternal Truths* of 1850 Schelling insists that it is 'impossible to explain the contingency and the actuality of things out of mere reason' adding with view to Hegel that, 'for this end, nothing would remain but to suppose that reason becomes untrue to itself, [*daß die Vernunft sich selbst untreu werde*] and falls off from itself, the same idea, which was first presented as the complete, and which no further dialectic could have anything on, that this idea, without having any ground or reason within it [to do so], *sans rime ni raison*, as the French say, would shatter itself into the world of contingent things, reluctant against the concept, opaque to reason.' (SW XI 584) In § 247 of the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, when Hegel is setting out the vantage point of the idea as it has externalised itself, Hegel raises the thought that the idea must run through nature and through subjectivity on a 'path of return' to itself, so that it has experienced that which is plainly different to itself: 'the divine idea is just this, to decide itself, to posit this other out of itself and to take it back into

already present in embryonic form, developed not after Hegel but concurrently to Hegel and in antagonistic reciprocity. And lastly Frank argues conclusively that a renewed engagement with Schelling – now freed of the political taboo imposed on his thought by the Hegelian-Marxist orthodoxy and its branding of Schelling as originator of reactionary irrationalism – would be highly productive for post-Marxian theory, particularly with regards to Schelling's counter-Hegelian philosophy of time, freedom and history. As an example among many for the intellectual ancestry of Schelling, we cite Marx's famous parallel critique of Hegel's bored idea, in the *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844: 'This entire transition from logic into philosophy of nature is nothing but the transition – so difficult to achieve for the abstract thinker and hence described so adventurously – from *abstraction* into *intuition*. The *mystical* feeling, which drives the philosopher from abstract thought into intuition, is *boredom*, the yearning for a content... insofar as this abstraction grasps itself and feels an infinite boredom of itself, in Hegel the giving up of abstract thought, only moving in thought, which is everything without eyes and ears and teeth, appears as a decision [*als Entschliessung*], to recognise nature as essence and shift to intuition.' (MEW I 586)

itself again, to be subjectivity and spirit.’ (HW IX 24) Apart from the reminder that the idea cannot decide lest we impute some kind of volition to it, to this thought Schelling responds in lectures given in Munich in 1836 such (note that these arguments were already presented earlier, approximately from 1828 onwards):

‘One has, in order to find a reason for the progress of the idea, tried to help by saying: it exists at the end of the logic, but it has not proven itself yet, it must thus still go outside of itself, to prove itself. But this is one of the many false pretences by which one can only beguile the thoughtless. Because to whom shall the idea prove itself? To itself? But it is that which is certain and secure of itself and which knows in advance that it will not perish in the being-different; it would be a battle without all purpose for it. Thus it would have to prove itself to a third, an observer? But where is this observer? At the end of the day it shall prove itself only to the philosopher, i.e., the philosopher must wish that it lends itself to this externalisation, so that the opportunity is given to him to explain nature and the spiritual world and the world of history.’ (SW X 153)

Elsewhere, in the 1833 lectures, Schelling adds that, if the monotony of its being was so unbearable for the idea, it would have externalised itself earlier and would not have to await its own logical completion first. But if indeed the idea had to first reach logical completion, then it has nothing to learn from externalisation, at best it is nature and the world of spiritual history which has to learn from the idea. (PP 225-226) It is not the idea but the philosopher who wishes and wills the ὄντως ὄν and not merely the empty ὄν, it is the philosopher who wants the existing universe in its concretion and its contingency. Now, the true reason for the necessary externalisation of the idea has been found. It is the entirely empirical existence of an extra-logical world and an extra-logical world which wants to be known and explained, and which entreats the philosopher – lest he is willing to present a mere logic without any real effectivity – to leave the dialectical necessity behind and decide freely to enter into the intuition of nature and history. (PP 227) As Schelling continues, the way Hegel actually presents the *Abfall der Idee* (the ‘descent of the idea’ into nature, HW IX 28) it can only be understood as a mystical self-expulsion, or the dim intuition of the divine expulsion into nature, the inspiration of which Hegel finds in Jakob Boehme (whom Hegel regarded highly, and called ‘the first German philosopher’ in the *History of Philosophy*, HW XX 94). Where Boehme says ‘die göttliche Freiheit erbricht sich in die Natur’ (the divine freedom breaks out or, more precisely, vomits itself into nature, which is the more common meaning of *sich*

erbrechen – a language which is not uncommon in the German mystical and spiritual tradition, one is tempted to think of Martin Luther's scatological supplications), Hegel says 'die göttliche Idee entläßt die Natur' (SW X 153).⁵² But the implicit and unacknowledged theosophical empiricism of Hegel's logic is not yet the higher empiricism or metaphysical empiricism of Schelling, although as critically sublated, the former can have its appropriate place in the latter. Similarly, the labour of pure thought has its place in post-critical metaphysics, after the renewed critique of cosmic reason and of the superior rationalist metaphysics of Hegel. After all, it is not nothing which thought discovers in the progressions of its own ether. Pure thought, the pure negativity of thought – what Schelling in the Berlin lectures will call *reinrationale Philosophie* (purely-rational philosophy) is not at all obsolete or unnecessary. What pure thought thinks is entirely real, but the point is that it is not yet reality. Schelling explains: 'in that the rational-science [*die Vernunftwissenschaft*] deduces the content of actual being, and is thus accompanied by experience, lay for many the illusion that it does not merely conceive the actual [*das Wirkliche*] but also the actuality [*die Wirklichkeit*], or that the actual had also come into being in this manner, and that the merely logical process would also be the actual process of becoming. But nothing happens here outside of thought, there is no actual, but merely a logical process which unfolds here.' (SW XIII 65) Once again, Schelling affirms that Kant's critique leaves to pure thought 'nothing but science enclosed in the essence of things.' (Pa 137)

Perhaps here is the place to clarify – in line with our interpretation of Schelling's oeuvre as the expression of one integral philosophy – how this position is an invariant throughout all of Schelling's thought and how, insofar the early system outlines serve as basis for the development of Hegel's absolute idealism, Hegel has clearly moved away from Schelling's intention or the spirit of those early outlines. To be sure in the works of the so called identity system, such as the *Darstellung meiner Philosophie* of 1801, the *Fernere Darstellungen* of 1802, and the *System of the Whole of Philosophy* of 1804, Schelling attempts primarily to present the speculative indifference of the real and the ideal, or of being and thought,

⁵² Schelling points out that Hegel is himself aware of the theosophical underbelly of his philosophy. Thus Schelling points to a change Hegel makes between the 1817 and the 1830 versions of § 248 of the *Encyclopedia*, where Hegel deletes the qualification of the *Abfall der Idee* as 'rightly called such', which indicates that Hegel became aware of the highly problematic theosophical conception of nature within his supposedly purely-logical philosophy. (SW X 152)

precisely in order to lead the transcendental construction of reality out of its encapsulation in the subjective or intersubjective position in which it had been with Fichte, and to objectify it or spread it across the universe. When in the late lectures Schelling is developing his critique of Hegel based on the distinction of thatness and whatness, he addresses the seeming dissonance between this early program and the virulent critique of Hegel's absolute idealism by noting that 'some have been very surprised by this simple, unmistakable, and precisely therefore also highly important distinction [between thatness and whatness]; because in a preceding philosophy they had heard about a misunderstood identity of thought and being. I will not challenge this identity, properly understood, for it derives from myself, but I shall indeed combat its misunderstanding and the philosophy which derives from the latter.' (SW XIII 59) The misunderstanding and the philosophy which derive from the latter are both those of Hegel. The speculative indifference of the ideal and the real, and the absolute identity of being and thought, which the early system drafts of Schelling present, is true with regards to essence or the whatness of things only, but not with regard to existence. It was never intended by Schelling to be true with regard to existence.⁵³ However, as we mentioned earlier, it is the experience of the sublation of Schelling's essential indifference of the real and the ideal into Hegel's superior proof of God, and the sustained critical engagement with the latter, which allow Schelling to eventually render explicit the continuity of his own thought with Kant on the question of the limits of reason. As Schelling clarifies his position:⁵⁴

⁵³ The resistance to the essential and the absolute identity in reason appears in the early works not under the name of existence but rather as the dark ground or as the infinite real activity of nature (as opposed to transcendental activity).

⁵⁴ Schelling is by no means an irrationalist, belying Lukacs' polemical and politically motivated attempt to position the origin of post-Hegelian irrationalism in Schelling in *the Destruction of Reason* of 1952. (Lukacs 1988) At best, Schelling's critique of reason must be understood as a Kantian delimitation of reason – his general position is characterised by what can be called an equidistance to Hegel's optimist rationalism and Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's pessimist irrationalism. Hence the co-existence of negative and positive aspects of philosophy in Schelling. There has been much confusion because Schelling at times presents the two aspects of his philosophy as if they were free-standing, which they are not in fact. The negative aspect is the investigation of proto-logic (not a full fledged speculative logic of existence, which is prohibited by the critique of cosmic reason, but the theory of the basic parameters or possibilities of thought) while the positive aspect is the historical and existential cosmology which grasps the existing universe and the human being within it in

‘All insight must appear as rational. In this sense I am and we are rationalist... Viewed as a power, reason is that in us which must be convinced. This already makes clear that as a power reason has a negating relation to positive claims. Thus it does not claim anything positive itself and must itself first be convinced to allow even this positive claim. Moreover: since reason is that which must be convinced, it is clear that it can not itself be the actor. It is that in us to which everything must be brought, before which everything must be presented. The word reason [*Vernunft*] comes from what has been heard [*vom Vernommenen*], examined [*Vernehmen*]... But precisely because reason is only entitled to cognition, it can and must not want to be the actor itself, – no more than a judge in a dispute would be entitled to be himself an acting part, himself a party.’ (PP 160-161)

The positive existence or thatness of being can never be deduced or concluded out of thought. Reason, as purely negative, must remain the receiver, the judge and the critic, but must not want to become an actor itself. In this sense for Schelling all true dialectics is necessarily negative – a view corroborated extensively in the dialogues initiated with readings Plato and Aristotle in the late lectures, which aim at demonstrating the negative and ‘truly destructive’ character of ancient dialectics, implicitly disputing Hegel’s claim to a continuation of ancient dialectics and instead identifying the positive Hegelian dialectics with the ‘bombast’ of the Eleatic school which had been destroyed by Socratic critique.⁵⁵ (SW XII 284, XIII 97) What is clearly and fully accessible to the negativity of reason and dialectical science is the essence of things – not more and not less. And in a longer elaboration Schelling says: ‘Indeed, when I have grasped the essence, the what of a thing, e.g. a plant, so I have grasped something actual, because the plant is not something non-existing, a chimera, but something existing, and in this

becoming (doing so by non-logical but rather symbolic and aesthetic means), whereby the proto-logic is expanded by a meta-narrative. The intertwined nature of both of these aspects is nowhere better presented than in the *Ages of the World*.

⁵⁵ In the recent discovery of Schelling in German scholarship, a number of monographs have explored the affinity of Schelling’s critical dialectics with Adorno’s negative dialectics, see for example Christian Iber’s *Das Andere der Vernunft als Ihr Prinzip*. (Iber 1994) While this affinity undeniably exists and vastly exceeds Adorno’s own explicit references to Schelling, Schelling yet crucially insists on the necessity for a superior empiricism to supplement and go beyond the negative dialectics, much closer in this regard to Benjamin than to Adorno.

sense it is true that the actual does not oppose our thought as something alien, withdrawn and inaccessible, that the concept and the being are one, that the concept is not external to the being but internal; but here only the content of the actual is meant, but with regards to this content it is something purely contingent that it exists.’ (XIII 60-61) The transcendental illusion of transition from essence to existence is precisely grounded in the very power of thought to envision and conceive the essential nature of the actual, the quidditative whatness of things, which is not already the actuality as it exists in quodditative thatness. Schelling explains:

‘And thus thought discovers, as soon as it focuses on the original content of reason, immediately its mobile nature through which it can not stand still in what Can Be [*dem Seinkönnen*]. But this transition must not be understood as a transition into actual being... There is no real, but merely a logical process; because being is here not external to the concept. The transition is a becoming-different, but only into a quidditative being, not into a quodditative one. There is no actual process, a mere thought-process... only as possibility, not as actuality, thought envisions the entire content which unfolds out of the stuff of universal power. [*ersieht das Denken allen jenen aus dem Stoff der allgemeinen Potenz sich entwickelnden Inhalt*]’ (Pa 224)

The actuality as it comes to exist, the being in the eminent sense or the ὄντως ὄν can not be known a priori. And as we have seen, it is not enough for thought to encapsulate itself in the empty identity of ὄν and οὐκ ὄν – as these types of being and non-being, the only ones that Hegel has – are logical abstractions from the actual ether of thought: the μὴ ὄν – the relative non-being. The one who wants the ὄντως ὄν must first think the μὴ ὄν, the contrary (and not the contradictory) of the ὄντως ὄν. For as Schelling says in the *Stuttgart Private Lectures* of 1810: ‘to investigate the being of the non-being [*das Wesen des Nichtseyenden*], therein lies the true difficulty, the cross of all philosophy.’ (SW VII 436) On the distinction between the οὐκ ὄν (*das Nichts* or *Nichtsein*) and the μὴ ὄν (*das Nichtseiende* or *nicht Seiende*), Schelling points, almost a century before Sartre, to the different usage of ‘rien’ and ‘le néant’ in the French language, where the first denotes a nothing which is not and in no way at all, and the latter denotes a being which is but is in the mode of being not. Schelling explains further that in the Greek language the ontological distinction has a grammatical equivalent in that it is commonly put to use, such as when someone had the disposition and the possibility to commit a crime, but did not commit it, one will say ‘μὴ ἐποίησε’ whereas

if someone did not commit a crime but also had no real possibility to commit the crime, one would say ‘οὐκ ἐποίησε’. (SW X 283-284) Also when we say ‘do not do this!’ to someone, we are referring to a construction with μή not with οὐκ as by demanding someone not to do something we are acknowledging that the person at least has the possibility to do so. Schelling says what we are really saying is: ‘do not let the position of this action take place, I am negating the position of the action, but not its reality’ (since as a possibility or, better yet, as a virtuality, it is already in some sense real, even if not posited). (ibid) Taken metaphysically or ontologically and not strictly grammatically, the existing meontic ether which thought grasps, is nothing but the projection of the potentials of reality, or we could also say, the virtualities of reality.⁵⁶ (SW X 285)

Unlike the οὐκ ὄν by which Hegel begins and which does not exist since it is absolutely not, apart from its being as logical abstraction or in the concept alone, the meontic being is not but only relative to being, it is everything that being could be and that hence is entirely real and has a certain type of existence, albeit not as the existence itself, *das Seiende selbst*, or αὐτὸ τὸ ὄν as Schelling also says. (SW XIII 70, and passim) As such, the μή ὄν is a virtual reality, an actively problematic ground of being that relates to objective reality like a subject,

⁵⁶ It is in this context that Deleuze writes in *Différence et Répétition*: ‘How unjust, in this regard, is Hegel’s critique about the black cows. From the two philosophers, it is Schelling who knows how to make difference exit the night of identity with lightnings that are more sharp, more varied and more terrifying than those of contradiction: with progressivity. Rage and love are the powers of the idea which develop out of a μή ὄν, that is to say not out of a negative or a non-being (οὐκ ὄν), but out of a problematic being or a non-existing being implicit in the existences beyond the ground.’ (Deleuze 2011, P. 246-247) The affirmative quote is a subtle giveaway of Deleuze’s own Platonism or better Neo-Platonism (masked as reversal and as Nietzscheanism, but the sophist Nietzsche knows of no ideas) which equally sets out from the *Sophistes*, see *Platon et le Simulacre*, (in Deleuze 1969) and which finds its meontic being in the virtual – as a ‘Platonism of the virtual’ to use a term deployed by Badiou in *La clameur de l’Être*. (see Badiou 2007) But note that, against Badiou’s polemical intention, the Platonism of the virtual is also the Platonism of Plato – as much dynamic philosophy of nature as contemplation of the eternal – whereas Badiou’s own ‘Platonism of the actual’ is a regression to a Pythagorean position which discards the truth of the Ionian philosophy.

which must be classically understood as the ὑποκείμενον or substratum, of being, that which is itself not but which sustains being through its non-being (as a modern doctrine, the central existentialist conception of an *être* which is ‘been’ or ‘gewesen’ through and by the *néant*, originates in Schelling).⁵⁷ Thought grasps, or in fact *is*, this meontic ether which is not but which can be, it is that which is not yet, it is pure power to be, or pure *Potenz*. We can see Schelling’s transcendental rearticulation of Platonic ontology at work here, from which the *Potenz* derives (and not from the peripatetic *potentia* as might be expected, Plato’s *Sophistes* remains the ‘initiation to all higher science’ – ‘being is nothing but power’ – τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν οὐκ ἄλλο τι πλὴν δύναμις, *Sop.* 247e, and Schelling clarifies repeatedly with reference to the *Sophistes* that ‘δύναμις = *Potenz*’, Pa 460). Denoting this pure form of power – that which is the pure power to be – Schelling introduces a new term: *das Seinkönnen*, which we will translate as the ‘Can Be’ (in those cases where we do not simply use the German term, the construction as verbum captures the dynamic connotation of *Seinkönnen* – literally: that being which can be, but also the ability to be – better than ‘potential-being’). The μὴ ὄν or *das Nichtseiende* is precisely a *Seinkönnen* insofar as it has the power to become being. It is the virtual power which thought envisions and conceives, and – let us risk the term, after Schelling – immediately intuit.

⁵⁷ Hegel, on the contrary, thinks the subject as the result of a cancellation or negation of abstract relata which is simply the dialectical movement itself, hence making the subject the result of a process of negation (de facto as historical process of the mediation of social contradictions). For Schelling, the progression of self-cancellation may be a necessary condition for the subject (and at any rate, as a general figure of thought it originates in the ‘transcendental history of self-consciousness’ of the *System of Transcendental Idealism* of 1800) but it is not yet a sufficient condition. For the latter, there must be an actual difference and actual opposition to being, an actual power. Hence the radically opposed conceptions of freedom in Hegel and Schelling, which clash most poignantly in the opposition of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Freedom Essay* (two works which are in many ways characteristic for their authors – the patience and the iron resoluteness of the systematiser on the one hand and the passionate flash of genius of the visionary on the other). Once again Manfred Frank has proved the thesis of Schelling’s anticipation of the existentialist conception of the subject in detail. See especially his *Selbstbewusstseinstheorien von Fichte bis Sartre* (Frank 1999) and *Selbstgefühl. Eine historisch-systematische Erkundung* (Frank 2002).

This is the only meaning of intellectual intuition: not a vision of the Absolute or the totality but the intimation or feeling of the virtual powers of existence, intellectual but in fact much closer to feeling and imagination than to reason – as such, intellectual intuition is a basic attribute of all life and of all consciousness and not a kind of mystical gift, very different to a vision which would envision not the powers of existence but actual supra-sensuous or trans-temporal existence and could only be called clairvoyance. Through the intuition of its own intellectual content, ‘thought discovers, as soon as it focuses on the original content of reason, immediately its mobile nature through which it can not stand still in what Can Be [*dem Seinkönnen*].’ (Pa 224) As ‘infinite power to be’, driven towards being, wanting, lacking actual being, the meontic realm is also ‘an infinite lack of being’ [*der unendliche Mangel an Seyn*]. [SW XII 49] While Hegel’s οὐκ ὄν immediately merges into abstract being and thus offers no resistance to the logical process which will pull both the abstract being and its abstract other into concretion (like Münchhausen, Schelling says, referring to the famous German tale of the lying baron who, in one of his exploits, pulls himself out of a swamp by his own hair, PP 220), to grasp the space of thought as the μὴ ὄν means to understand the real antagonism, the real difference of thought and being through which the former cannot pass into the latter of its own accord. Trapped in this antagonism, in the impossibility of attaining being and yet being infinitely attracted to being and in need of being, once thought has grasped its own content and its own powers, its yearning for being can only ever produce the ‘perpetual cataclysm of reason’ [*der fortwährende Umsturz der Vernunft*, SW XIII 152] in which thought is again and again violently knocked down by a *Seyn* which exceeds its power.

Unable to accomplish the step from essence into existence out of its own necessity, yet bound to demand it, reason is thus ‘paralysed’. (Pa 258) A paralysis which Schelling calls the ‘last crisis of rational science’ [*die letzte Krisis der Vernunftwissenschaft*, SW XI 566] – this crisis, is the crisis of cosmic reason, from its Parmenidean beginnings to its last peak in Hegel, before Schelling’s critical reflexions enforce the cataclysm which will open the way for the waves of philosophical approaches to spring up in its wake (existentialism, pragmatism, dialectical materialism, vitalism, are all such programs of thought founded on the crisis of the last rationalism).⁵⁸ If we say classical metaphysics is overcome in Schelling and not in Kant,

⁵⁸ Schelling’s history of modern philosophy, delivered mostly in the lectures in Munich as part of the *Grounding of Positive Philosophy* and an earlier series of free-standing lectures known as the *History of Modern Philosophy* (although not delivered for this particular purpose but rather also intended as an introduction to positive philosophy), presents the

despite having been shattered by Kant before, it is because where Kant's destruction of the ontological proof has merely a negative and prohibitive character, the abyss is merely as limit of cognition, in Schelling the destruction of the ontological proof acquires a new meaning, making the abyss, the chaos, the positive principle of a new post-critical metaphysics critically purged of the excesses of cosmic reason.

For Schelling the crisis of reason is at once a chance for the renewal of philosophy, for the articulation of a new cosmology based on metaphysical empiricism. In this sense Schelling is the philosophical Augustus to Kant's Caesar. His intention is to turn that which in Kant was a singular occurrence (the immediate encounter of the infinite) into the established and solidified ground of thought, even if this ground is itself an unground, the absence of all ground. Thus Schelling quotes approvingly the entire passage from the *Critique of Pure Reason* on the *Abgrund* as that 'unconditioned necessity, which we so indispensably require, as the last carrier of all things', as the 'true abyss for human reason [*der wahre Abgrund für die menschliche Vernunft*]' under which 'everything sinks under us' and everything 'hovers without foothold'. (AA A613 / B 641, SW XIII 163) And Schelling asks about this *Abgrund*, 'what else is this than that in front of which reason stands still, by which it is devoured, in the face of which it is nothing any more, incapable of doing anything?' (SW XIII 164) But

history of modern philosophy since Descartes as an ongoing process of the rationalisation of thought, whereby the striving for the positive, vivid in ancient philosophy, revived among the scholastics, and still alive in anomalous modern thinkers like Spinoza, is more and more supplanted by the growing and ever-more confident rationalism of modernity finally culminating in the 'last crisis of rational science' which is hence a crisis of modern reason. Unlike Hegel's history of philosophy which is a history of steady accumulation and increase in wisdom, Schelling's history is one of crisis and the necessity of decision and excision (an excision without preservation, characterising Schelling's concept of *κρίσις*) – a pattern which is repeated in the their respective philosophies of history. That Schelling's thought stands at the beginning of the crisis which leads to the articulation of post-rationalist and post-critical metaphysics is undeniable. Not only Feuerbach, Kierkegaard, Marx and Engels (who are all directly developing their thought on the basis of Schelling's intervention) attest to this but also the foundation of American Pragmatism by the self-avowed Schellingian Peirce, the metaphysics of the will of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, and even the vitalism of Ravaisson and Bergson are still in an immediate – if often unacknowledged – affinity to Schelling's destruction of cosmic reason.

crucially, and this is the mistake of all the timid readings of Kant, 'one would entirely misunderstand Kant if one wanted to see an abolition of that idea (of the groundlessly necessary existence) in that passage; what he wanted to express is rather just its non-conceptuality [also: its incomprehensibility, *seine Unbegreiflichkeit*].' (ibid) The mistake of thought had been to attempt and disclose this abyss of pure existence, this groundless existence of the world and of itself, through the means of reason and reflexion – the ontological proof of God. In the final demise of the ontological proof of God in its classical and post-classical (Hegelian) form, Schelling responds to the 'last crisis of rational science' by the most difficult imperative posed to thought: to let go of reason, to let go of reflexion and to let go of the concept of God. It is in this sense that Schelling compares the entrance to philosophy to the entrance of Dante's *Inferno* above which it is written 'let all hope vanish, ye who enter', and entreats thought that 'even God must be given up by the one who wants to step into the point of beginning of the truly free philosophy' and that 'who truly wants to philosophise must want nothing, know nothing, feel utterly bare and poor, give all away, to win everything.' (SW IX 217) It is this step, which Schelling, with Plato, compares to death – we can say it is only this speculative death – which allows thought to grasp infinite, immediate existence as its own ground.

'The merely and only existing is just that through which all that comes from thought is knocked down, that in front of which thought falls silent, in front of which reason itself yields, because thought only deals with possibility, potency; where this is excluded thought has no power [*keine Gewalt*]. The infinitely existing is secured from thought and all doubt, precisely because it is this [infinitely existing]. Being is not because there is a thought, thought is because there is a being.' (SW XIII 161)

In letting go of reflexion thought discovers the absolute primacy of being over thought, for the absolute condition of being is not thought (as it appears in merely negative and logical philosophy) but the absolute condition of thought is being. In this realisation lies the crux of what Schelling recognises as the true meaning of the ontological proof – a meaning which is revealed by Schelling – as he himself claims in the lectures on the *History of Modern Philosophy* – for the first time in the history of the argument. (SW X 68 ff.) For 'as little as the ontological argument... could prove the existence of God, properly understood it should have led to the beginning of positive philosophy', that is to say to the philosophy which begins with sheer existence. (SW XIII 158) Schelling says in the *Philosophy of Revelation*:

‘I do not set out from the concept of God, like the previous metaphysics and also the ontological argument attempted, but I must drop this very concept, the concept of God, in order set out from the sheer existence in which nothing is thought apart from sheer existence. – and to see whether from this one can reach the godhead.’ (SW XIII 158)

Hence what can be proved in the ontological argument is not the concept of God but only ‘that which exists before all power and hence undoubtedly. I call it the undoubtedly existing.’ (ibid) This undoubtedly existing, this sheer existence, is all that thought can prove and suppose, but this existence is not God as that would mean to grant it an essence, a whatness, it cannot possess. But then what kind of being is this existence? Schelling responds:

‘It is inconsistent to ask: what kind of being [*was für ein Wesen*] could exist necessarily; because thus I am supposing that the necessarily existing is preceded by an essence [*ein Wesen*], a what, a possibility, where I rather have to posit it as the merely existing, in which there is nothing yet of an essence, a what, to be conceived. The way the old metaphysics dealt with the concept, the illusion always emerged in that the pure concept of the necessarily existing, in which nothing of an essence should be thought yet, an essence (namely the godhead) was imputed, and not, as we taught earlier, the concept dropped in order to get to the merely being [*zum bloß Seyenden*] (SW XIII 167)’

As we have seen before, reflexion and reason deal with the essences of things, their whatness. It is not erroneous to argue that there must be an independent and infinite existence, an unconditioned thatness as ground of thought, simply because there is thought, but the mistake of all rationalist metaphysics is to impute a whatness (namely that of God) to this infinite thatness, to the ground of all existence, a mistake which throws reason into the perpetual cataclysm of seeking something it cannot attain. To purge metaphysics of its rationalist excess thus means to drop the whatness in the ontological proof. The classical ontological proof runs somewhat like this: I can think the concept of God (as the most perfect, most powerful, etc.) therefore there must be a God (for otherwise there would be something more perfect and more powerful). Now, the Schellingian riposte is that this argument has falsely focussed on the essences from which an existence was to be deduced whereas if all essences are dropped only the thought remains: I think, therefore there must be existence (not my existence but the sheer and infinite existence which is neither subject nor God). About this being ‘which precedes its

concept, and hence all concepts' we can say that it 'must be the necessarily existing' and this itself is already 'the only truth which remains of the ontological argument.' (XIII169)

But the question poses itself now, how we are supposed to think this sheer existence before all concept? How are we to think that which excludes and expulses all concept and all reason, that before which reason breaks down, 'this groundless eternity which precedes every thought, this "Abgrund" in which thought devours itself'. (Pa 455) Do we not already have a concept for that which is supposed to be without all concept when we think it? Schelling responds that philosophy must begin with the 'a priori unconceptualisable [*unbegreiflich*] so that it becomes a posteriori conceptualisable [*begreiflich*].' (Pa 440) Thought must posit itself into this a priori unconceptualisable, it must be strong enough to sustain the paradoxical tension when doing so, in order to then step out in the conceptualisable, for the abyss 'is just terminus a quo; science does not dwell on it but must move away from it and only posits it in order to move away from it.' (Pa 455) If we were to dwell on this unconceptualisable, it would not be philosophy but mystical meditation and contemplation of the ineffable, however philosophy is different to mystical contemplation precisely insofar as it does not dwell in the esoteric, but steps into the exoteric and renders the esoteric explicit. Schelling's lasting philosophical loyalty to the friend Hölderlin reveals itself again when in the late lectures Schelling calls 'that which is the beginning of all thought' but is 'not yet thought', this sheer existence of the abyss, by another Hölderlinian concept, 'the unprethinkable' [*das Unvordenkliche*] or the 'unprethinkable being' [*das unvordenkliche Sein*]. (Pa 450 ff., also SW XIV 337, and already once in one of the draft fragments for the *Ages of the World*, WA 214) The unprethinkable is that before which nothing can be thought and thus the beginning of all thought, but it is at once also that which is itself before thought and hence unthinkable. To sustain this paradoxical tension is the true test of thought, more taxing and demanding than merely to think the contradiction in things. Schelling also calls this unprethinkable being before and outside of all concept *das Blindseiende* (the blindly-being), or *das Blindexistierende* (the blindly-existing) about which it would, strictly speaking, be already too much to say that it exists, as 'it does not exist but it is the existence itself, it is αὐτὸ τὸ ὄν.' (Pa 435) This unprethinkable, blindly-existing *Seyn* is the true starting point of philosophy, not the already-conceptual, logical abstraction of the τὸ ὄν of Parmenides-Hegel. But to posit ourselves truly into the starting point of existential cosmology, we must enter deeper into this unprethinkable existence in order to make it 'a posteriori conceptualisable', not by rendering something explicit which is already implicitly given in it, but by sustaining its effects and its

violence on thought and in thought.⁵⁹ We must ask what it means to drop reflexion, the concept, and God, in order to face the unprethinkable.

Let us remember that in the history of thought the ontological proof of God has two interconnected and interdependent functions, firstly it is to prove the existence of the divine creator and secondly to guarantee the ultimate necessity of the logical conceptions of reason, or the necessity of necessity as we have called it – the foundation and basis of all classical metaphysics. In this sense it was correct to say that the full impact and import of the ontological proof is explicated only with Leibniz' introduction of the principle of sufficient reason which is simply the concentrated formulation of ultimate metaphysical necessity governing the universe. This essential concatenation is demonstrated clearly in Hegel's protection of the principle of sufficient reason and of ultimate metaphysical necessity against Kant through the articulation of the superior ontological proof of God. But now we have presented both the superior destruction of Hegel's superior proof in the critical reflexions of Schelling's late philosophy, as well as Schelling's new and translogical (extra-logical) interpretation of the ontological argument as proof of unprethinkable existence. This must have consequences for both God and for ultimate necessity – or the principle of sufficient reason. The blindly-existing (as the *Seyn* envisaged by Hölderlin) has negative or apophatic properties commonly connected to God: it is infinite, immediate and irreflexive (there are no positive claims involved here, they are all simply the negation of limitations that we cannot impute to the unprethinkable, such as the *un*-prethinkable itself). These are the attributes or properties without which God would not be God. (PP 349) However, since we can not impute a concept or an essence to the blindly-existing, it cannot be said to have any of the positive attributes that God is supposed to have, such as 'the wisdom, understanding, goodness, and

⁵⁹ It is in this sense, that Deleuze's profoundly Schellingian, or shall we say post-Schellingian, text *Différence et Répétition* speaks of an 'original violence inflicted upon thought' pulling thought out of its concepts which only think 'eternal possibilities' and 'forcing thought to think, and also to think its central ungrounding [effondrement], its fracture, its very own natural 'powerlessness' which is confounded with its greatest power', *Différence et Répétition*, (Deleuze 2011, p. 181, 192). More generally, the figure of thought of being as the *prius* of thought, to speak Schellingian, or of the primacy of being over thought, has consistently been the theme of post-idealist or post-rationalist philosophy, whether this *prius* has been thought as productive activity, time, life, force, difference or in another way. We have reconstructed the philosophical *prius* of these projects above.

holiness of God'. (ibid) The ontological argument proves the former but not the latter, 'the ontological proof – if it can be called a proof at all – only proves, if one understand by "God" the mere substance of being, but not if one understand by it the Lord of being [*der Herr des Seins*]', this mere substance of the blindly-existing which is proven is 'not an emphatically being [*nicht ein Seiendes*], not a being in the positive sense [*nicht ein im positiven Sinn Seiendes*]' but precisely nothing but unground or *Abgrund*. (PP 163-164)

As such, if there is a God (and there is no way to prove this), the blindly-existing would have to be that which in God is not (yet) God, or what the *Freedom Essay* of 1809 already calls 'the dark ground' or 'unground' in God over which God himself has no power (SW VII 406, ff.).⁶⁰ Hence, if there should be a God (now or in future) of whom this blindly-existing would be a part, it would be necessary to think a scission or split inside God – a God of wisdom, goodness and holiness who has no necessity to exist, who thus cannot be said to positively exist, and a sheer, dark, but infinite existence which is at best the eternal past of God out of which God must liberate himself and posit himself as positive in order to become God. Insofar as this should be possible – and it is not a given, on the contrary this struggle, this journey of battle and revelation, is precisely the content of history, or rather of a superior history which does not reduce to the logic of what has been but anticipates the totality of what could be – philosophy can never prove 'the existence of God, but only the godliness of the existing [*die Gottheit des Existirenden*], of the eternally being in actu in itself [*des actu von*

⁶⁰ Schelling's *Philosophy of Revelation* was long rejected as an exit from philosophy and a retreat into theology – a story propagated chiefly by the Left-Hegelians. In fact, Schelling's *Philosophy of Revelation* is perhaps the most philosophical, indeed hyper-philosophical, treatment of religious scripture in modern thought. Moreover, the position taken by Schelling in all of his positive or cosmological work, already from the *Freedom Essay* onwards, is hardly one which can be called orthodoxly religious or theological. On the contrary, Schelling's central figure of thought of the fracture or split inside a schizophrenic God, between a blindly-being abyss which is not yet God but only a chaos of madness and unreason, and the God of reason who wants to manifest as a being of light and spirit but cannot, is anything but orthodox, but can rather only be seen in continuity with the subterranean strands of heretic and heterodox teachings such as Gnosis, Kabbalah or Sufism (and the private notebooks of Schelling which have recently been published in the *Schellingiana* series demonstrate that Schelling was immersed in these heterodox traditions) – which are elevated into a purely intra-philosophical articulation by Schelling.

selbst ewig Seyenden], and this also only a posteriori'. (Pa 475) After Schelling, the ontological proof does not any longer prove the existence of the divine (nor the divinity of the concept) but only the divinity of existence – and this only potentially and a posteriori insofar as existence, sheer existence, has the potential to become divine in time. But with the diminishing of the positively existing God we also lose the ultimate necessity, the necessity of necessity as we called it, that would grant the concepts of metaphysics their apodictic certainty.

Schelling is aware of the dangerous terrain thus entered. 'We are treading here on paths that have not been treaded before – lines of thought that are foreign to our time.' (Pa 457) As we remember, we require a ground for the meontic non-being, or the pure power to be, the Can-Be which thought discloses as its very own ether, as otherwise this $\mu\eta\ \delta\upsilon\nu$ would have no $\delta\upsilon\nu$ that can be it [*dass es wesen kann*, one would say in German]. This latter being, the very being itself, the $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}\ \tau\acute{o}\ \delta\upsilon\nu$, that thought requires and demands but cannot reach out of itself, was discovered to be the blindly-existing that thought encounters when it drops its conceptions, or itself. The discovery is however not yet enough, there must still a further step made in order to obtain the blindly-existing as the ground of thought and the ground of the necessity of the conceptions of thought.

'The rational science really leads beyond itself and drives to return; but this itself can not set out from thought. Therefore rather a practical impulse is needed; but in thought there is nothing practical, the concept is only contemplative, and it only deals with the necessary while here something outside of necessity, something willed, is meant. It must be a will, from which the expulsion of A^0 out of reason, this last crisis of rational science, sets out.' (SW XI 565)

What is meant by A^0 here is *das Potenzlose*, the powerless, that is, that which is not the power to be, not the reflexion of being, but before and outside all power and reflexion – the unprethinkable. To achieve this being outside of all power, the ground of all power and that which power infinitely seeks to be and fails to be out of itself – it is necessary to make an active step, to will, to decide, the decision which we discovered already in the critique of Hegel as the only reality which transposes essence into existence. But the decision, the genuine decision, is not necessary, it is something contingent.

‘The merely actu necessarily existing, and until now we only have this one, is the merely contingently necessarily existing [*das zufällig notwendig Existirende*], or, as we can call it hence also, the blindly-existing;... the Can-Be [*das Seynkönnenende*] merely as such would not have a right to exist, but after the merely actu, that is, merely contingently necessary is, the merely possible can only raise its claim, only the unprethinkable being makes it possible for the power [*die Potenz*] to appear.’ (SW XIV 338)

From the outset of this study we have been searching for the necessity of necessity that purports to grant the stability of metaphysical concepts, reaching the first climax of our problematisation of the nexus Kant-Hegel-Schelling, we discover that in the founding move of a genuine post-critical metaphysics this necessity of necessity must be dropped and replaced by a contingent necessity. The necessity of all metaphysical concepts – the right of the meontic ether to exist – is itself borrowed, as it were, and depends on a decision, or a will that is contingent. All world-constructions are founded on a primal decision. But we are not talking here about a merely empirical contingency, a stochastic contingency or even a statistic contingency such as the accidental or aleatory occurrence. These are all already derivative and secondary contingencies, they are nothing that classical metaphysics would have to fear. We are talking about a foundational contingency, or the contingency of necessity itself, which in post-critical metaphysics, takes the place of the necessity of necessity, a principle of contingent reason which takes the place of the principle of sufficient reason. About this principle Schelling says:

‘The willing [or wanting, *das Wollen*] that is for us the beginning of another world, posited outside of the idea, is one which purely emerges out of itself, it is its own cause in a different sense as that in which Spinoza said this of the universal substance; because of it one can only say that it IS, not that it necessarily IS; in this sense it is the primally contingent [*das Urzufällige*], the primal contingency [*der Urzufall*] itself, while it is necessary to make a great distinction between the contingent, that is thus through another, and that which is contingent through itself, which has no cause outside of it and from which all other contingencies are to be derived.’ (SW XI 464)

The foundational principle of existential cosmology is this blind being before all concept and necessity, this being which simply is, this ὄν which is αὐτὸ τὸ ὄν but not yet ὄντως ὄν,

not yet the emphatically being or the unfolding concrete universe in all its virtual and actual reality in time. Or we can say the foundational principle of existential cosmology is existence, but not yet cosmos. In absence of a principle of sufficient reason, the world is out of joints, out of its hinges of necessity, all necessity within it, only sustained by an *Urzufall* that is itself the only *causa sui*, the only ground of all other merely conditioned contingencies in the world.⁶¹ It is evident that at this point the ontological proof of God, having run from its classical role as sustainer of metaphysics through its destruction by Kant, its superior rearticulation by Hegel, and its final destruction by Schelling, has now been transformed into an ontological proof of chaos. This is what remains of the ontological proof. In this sense there is a fundamental continuity between classical or rationalist and post-critical metaphysics, since it is not possible to entirely disband the ontological argument (lest one is willing restrict oneself to sophistry, relativism and anti-philosophy or rather misosophy) – rather what is required is to refound a critically purged metaphysics on the ontological proof of chaos and the contingency of necessity.⁶² Thought, pushed to its own limits, experiences its

⁶¹ Schelling's word *Urzufall* resonates uncannily with *Urknall*, the German word for the big bang, which is conceptually similar in modern physics insofar as it is understood as an initial singularity at which the laws of physics are suspended, or as the non-explained event which is itself the ground of all physical explanations. However, as a metaphysical concept, Schelling's *Urzufall* is conceived at a higher level of generality and is as such independent of physical hypotheses like that of the big bang – or put differently, the big bang is a theory about the contingency of the currently observed physical universe, the *Urzufall* is a theory about the contingency of all reality and its features such as the very existence of laws of physics (or we can say, using Neo-Platonic concepts, of both the visible and the intelligible universe).

⁶² Recently, a work by Quentin Meillassoux has developed a number of thoughts which appear in many ways similar to the line of thought developed here. Meillassoux' *Après la Finitude* (Meillassoux 2006) argues similarly for a refounded speculative philosophy of facticity (which he opposes to metaphysics) in which the ontological proof is deconstructed and reduced to a proof of absolute contingency, which Meillassoux' articulates as the necessity of contingency. However, apart from the grave stylistic and methodological differences between Meillassoux and the present work (Meillassoux seems to be able to disband with the historicity of thought and instead immediately access the ether of timeless philosophical or pseudo-geometrical deductions) there is also the seemingly minor but in fact decisive difference between the Schellingian 'contingency of necessity' and the

last crisis, the necessity to go beyond its own necessity, and to decide for chaos or the contingency of its necessity. This chaos, this unground beneath all stable reality, is the *Abgrund* which Kant intimated and the action or intervention of which he articulated transcendently as the heuristic device of the ideal of reason – the sorting mechanism within reason, which through its exclusions creates reality. The last step into post-critical metaphysics consists now in positing the existence of this abysmal ideal of reason – the ontological substratum of reality. Schelling insists that in this step no illegitimate transcendence, of the kind prohibited by critique, is involved:

‘The old metaphysics wanted to reach with the concept beyond the concept and into being. If I wanted to conclude from the idea of the highest being to its existence, that would be transcendent. But I posit the being before all idea, exclude all idea. The transcendence of the old metaphysics was merely relative, partial, timid; that of positive philosophy is absolute and resolute, but just therefore no transcendence in the sense in which Kant prohibits it. If I have made myself immanent in the idea, then I would become transcendent. But if I begin with the transcendent, like Spinoza, I do not transgress anything.’⁶³ (Pa 439)

The whole of our preceding presentation so far has precisely served the purpose of demonstrating the legitimacy of this move. If, we had right from the outset demanded the positive position of Hölderlin’s *Seyn* it would have indeed constituted a break with critical philosophy and (in absence of a progressive sublation) a return to pre-critical dogmatism. Now, however, having reconstructed the immanent demand of existence out of thought itself, in suspension of an uncritical presupposition of the laws of thought (hence the extensive discussion of Hegel), and in turn having, with Schelling, critically reduced this demand itself to the demand for an extra-logical or pre-reflexive being, we are able to stringently require the

Meillassouxian ‘necessity of contingency’ – while the former delivers the means to think the facticity of historical necessity and thus the possibility to think a philosophy of history open to radical intervention and transformation, the latter results in an ahistorical but instead fantastic or fictional theory of radical and radically fortuitous change.

⁶³ On this note, it is important to counter the contemporary dogma of pure immanence. An immanence can not be thought without a transcendence like a positive can not be thought without a negative. The point of philosophy is precisely to demystify and secularise all transcendence so that, under the austere stare of thought, it can reveal its true monstrosity.

position of the ideal of reason – or as we have called it with Schelling, the unprethinkable being. Let us make clear once again that this absolutely immanent ‘absolute transcendence’, this blindly-existing being, is not God, for it is neither wise, nor benevolent nor any of the other attributes granted to God. Rather it is pure infinite and immediate contingency without any positive determinations, *Urzufall* – something that even a radical atheist (not an agnostic who would simply profess ignorance of the primal ground) would have to think before all thought and being. On this point of the beginning there is hence an absolute convergence of radical atheism and Schelling’s messianic panentheism.⁶⁴ However Schelling sees the future coming of a redemptive God as the ultimate purpose of the universe (explicitly in the eschatology of the *Philosophy of Revelation*) whereas the atheist remains with the contingency and ungroundedness of existence, supposedly until the end of the universe (in heat death, big crunch, big freeze or whatever other scenario physics currently suggests as likely).⁶⁵ Schelling’s point in the above quote (and the reference to Spinoza is connected to a generally recurrent critique of Kant for not having taken Spinoza seriously enough) is that to right away posit the pure and simple existence, or the sheer substance without any essential determinations, by which Spinoza begins, is not transcendent as it does not ascend from a given immanence in thought unto a beyond of thought (which would still carry the conceptual determinations of thought) but rather immediately *descends* into sheer existence as the

⁶⁴ This is why Schelling, as he himself relates, writes in the memorial book of a friend who is an atheist, that the existence of God has been suspended and doubted by God himself, and that once God will laugh at those who have been misled and confused by this suspension. (PP 355) Although humorous, this statement is not entirely consistent with Schelling’s metaphysics according to which God (insofar as the radically historical and in this sense contingent God emerges in the course of history) can have no power over the unprethinkable unground, or the *Ursein* in himself as Schelling also expresses it: ‘*God has not given that Ursein to himself, and can not give it to himself*’. (PP 337)

⁶⁵ There is another parallel here between Schelling and the recently hyped work of Meillassoux which presents the thought of *L’inexistence divin* and of the possibility of a futural God as an entirely new option in metaphysics. Anyone slightly knowledgeable about the intellectual history of the 19th century will instantly recognise this figure of thought as one that has been explored extensively and intensively by romantic and post-romantic poets and philosophers. Manfred Frank has written an excellent book on the coming God, entitled *Der kommende Gott* in 1982, (Frank 1982) precisely investigating this figure of thought that once again sets out from the great visionary of the romantic generation, Hölderlin.

(un)ground of thought.⁶⁶ Hence the designation of existential cosmology as a '*philosophia descendens*', a philosophy which begins by the descent into sheer existence or unground, by letting go of all, as in the Dantean image that Schelling uses. (XIII 151) Only through this step, this letting go of the rational network in which everything stands and is determined through infinite logical interconnections, can philosophy get to the existential freedom beneath the already constituted world, only then there can be a philosophy where 'an explicit will decides', and a philosophy of 'personality, will and action', instead of one which attempts to 'explain everything in mere logical interconnection'. (PP 83) Schelling also calls this philosophy a 'metaphysical empiricism'. (SW XIII 114)

Schelling insists that empiricism does 'not at all exclude all knowledge of the supra-sensuous, as commonly supposed and also presupposed by Hegel', referring to the presentation of empiricism by Hegel in the *Encyclopaedia*. This is only the lowest kind of empiricism, an empiricism that takes only sense-perceptions as fact and experience. But the proponents of this empiricism, it should better be called sensualism, 'through the restriction of their philosophical empiricism on observation and analysis of psychological facts' exclude themselves 'from that great circle of true empiricism, which does not exclude anything, nothing that is given in nature, in the great history of human kind and its developments.' (SW

⁶⁶ In this sense, Schelling sees the beginning of a modern positive (extra-rational) philosophy in Spinoza, who begins by the 'blindly-being' that 'existence which precedes all thought', and this explains why Spinoza – despite his apparent hyper-rationalism – has been a central influence on virtually all thinkers of the trans- and extrarational. (Pa 427) With Spinoza there is 'the beginning of the reaction of orientalism against the occidentalism in our, essentially still Aristotelian, philosophy.' (Pa 430) In this context it is interesting to note that Kant did eventually, in the fragments of the *Opus Postumum*, begin with a serious reception of Spinoza, and did this under the influence Schelling's first writings on *Naturphilosophie*. It is proof of the sheer infinite openness and capacity of Kant's mind that the already over eighty year old Kant begins in these fragments with a thorough post-Spinozist rearticulation of his philosophy, and in one passage even cites Spinoza as the past of transcendental philosophy and Schelling as its present. (AA XXI 87) In the first convolute of the *Opus Postumum* (written last, around 1803) Kant comes indeed very close to Schelling's solution, by positing the 'universum' as an idea which is the condition for the three transcendental ideas of reason (God, world and soul). Unfortunately these thoughts break off before Kant could develop them further.

XIII 112) The ,true‘, ,great‘ or ,superior‘ empiricism on the other hand is one which takes the formations of spirit and the emergence of ideas in history, as well as the fact of, supra-sensuous but nonetheless factual, will and decision, which all have an essential or logical necessity but are existentially ungrounded or contingent, as expressions of the contingency of necessity.⁶⁷ While cosmic reason deduces an absolute and overarching necessity governing the historical development of the world, the metaphysics of chaos – rigorously grounded on the ontological proof of chaos – apprehends the meta- and transphysical reality of ideas (we noted the affirmation of the reality of ideas initially as the characteristic of all metaphysical thought, be it classical or post-critical) in the contingent unfolding of existence and the existing universe. Properly reduced to its sole function – the disclosure of logical essences without any existential claims – negative philosophy can be seen as an ‘apriorism of the empirical’ [*Apriorismus des Empirischen*], while the positive and existential philosophy

⁶⁷ In the *Philosophy of Revelation* Schelling presents a kind of hierarchy of empiricisms in which the lowest level is the empiricism of sense-perceptions. The next higher level is a ‘mystical empiricism’ by which Schelling presumably means an empiricism of para-normal or supra-sensuous perceptions, which is already higher (in the sense of acknowledging more than the empiricism of sense-perceptions), but is not essentially different as it still only deals with what is present to perception. A higher form of ‘mystical empiricism’ is an empiricism not of anything perceived but of a kind of metaphysical (and entirely non-sensuous) feeling of the supra-sensuous, such as in Jacobi but also Bacon, Locke and Newton who all acknowledge the feeling of supra-sensuous reality. The next higher form of empiricism is the theosophy of Boehme which Schelling also calls ‘speculative mysticism’ or ‘theoretical mysticism’ as it does no longer depend on any particular perception or feeling but attains a purely intellectual intuition of the universal creative process. However, in Boehme this intuition is unscientific and becomes incomprehensible as soon as it turns to concretion, (and as we noted earlier, there is also an unacknowledged theosophical ‘speculative mysticism’ of this kind at work in Hegel). Finally, the highest level of empiricism, Schelling’s own superior or metaphysical empiricism relates to all of these empiricisms like ‘chemistry’ relates to ‘alchemy’ and like ‘astronomy’ relates to ‘astrology’ which only ‘some ignorant could confuse’. (SW XIII 115-121) The (trans-rational and not irrational) superiority of metaphysical empiricism over the lower empiricisms lies in the absolute *logical* and scientific necessity of the former – proven in the ontological proof of chaos. On a further note, it is clear that later articulations of superior empiricism, such as those of Whitehead and Deleuze, but also Benjamin’s mystical empiricism stand in clear continuity to the historically first articulation of this position.

which emerges from the collapse of cosmic reason, or the attempt of purely-logical philosophy to deduce existence, must be called an ‘empirical apriorism’ [*empirischer Apriorismus*] or better yet an ‘empiricism of the apriorical’ [*Empirismus des Apriorischen*]. (SW XIII 130) Cosmic reason deduces the empirical in the apriori and thus comes to the empirical with an already formed truth. The metaphysics of chaos – metaphysical empiricism – the philosophy of positivity – on the other hand, discovers the metaphysical necessity of ideas as a facticity in the world, it reads the constitutive power of ideas within the wild currents of events and decisions that emerge out of chaos and that make up the real and unpredictable stuff of life.

Part 2: Post-Critical Cosmogony

In the first part of this study we entered into the nexus Kant-Hegel-Schelling in order to get to the ground of the problematic of the ontological proof and approach the crisis in which the ontological proof of God is transformed into the ontological proof of chaos, enabling the concomitant transformation of classical metaphysics into a decisively post-critical or existential metaphysics in which the ontological proof of chaos will figure as core, and beating heart in the same way in which the ontological proof of God provided the foundational structure of classical metaphysics. But the transformation has not already been accomplished. For this, the critique of cosmic reason can only be a propaedeutic, as it clears away the claims of an excessive reason and makes space for a metaphysics grounded in life, decision and contingency. What remains now is to draw the general contours of such a metaphysics, immanently producing anew the cosmogenetic and the logogenetic process out of nothing but chaos and unprethinkable decision, constructing anew the existential cosmos after the first part has deconstructed the cosmos of reason. But this also means that in the second part our relation to Kant's critical philosophy will have to change. While in the first part, the critique of cosmic reason, we were in fact enforcing and intensifying the Kantian gesture, now it is time to move beyond the Kantian framework, or rather to decisively and radically transform the latter towards the thought of a post-critical cosmogony. While Kant is crucial in carrying reason up to the *Abgrund*, and to force reason to recognise the pure negativity of itself without emergent positivity, (disregarding the partial and historically ineffective attempts of the *Opus Postumum*) Kant does not proceed to turn this *Abgrund* into the positive principle of a translogical cosmogonic process through which the collapsed cosmos is progressively reconstructed.⁶⁸ After the logic of the cosmos and the cosmos of

⁶⁸ Hence the cosmos, the universe, is left in an unthought suspense, as a result of which it can no longer be the object of metaphysical thought – a state which, apart from anomalous, explicitly cosmological philosophies such as those of Schelling or Whitehead, has more or less remained up to this day. Anyone familiar with recent developments in theoretical physics and physical cosmology will acknowledge that there is a real lacuna of philosophical cosmology today. Based on the crisis of the standard model of physics and the increasingly philosophical disputes between the adherents of the alternative fundamental theories (with string theory and quantum loop gravity as main adversaries) a struggle over the general interpretation of the universe and its development has broken out among leading physicists,

reason have critically collapsed, we are left with chaos, the sheer ungrounded facticity, the abyssal absence of sense, unreason. Yet we cannot remain in this state for we are facing a world in which there is at least a kind of transitory order and stability. Philosophy must explain the genesis of this logical order and of the stability of the world.

In a retrospective on Kant given in the lectures on the *History of Philosophy* of 1836 Schelling reiterates that ‘two demands are made of philosophy’, the first being to ‘explain the genesis of nature’ and the second being to ‘disclose the properly metaphysical world, the suprasensuous region’. (SW X 85) ‘Kant circumvented the first demand’, for as we have seen the truly generative function in the transcendental apparatus – the transcendental ideal of pure reason – is taken by Kant merely as a heuristic assumption of the internal operation of reason, yet it functions as yet another kind of hidden art of the soul of which we have no clue of its actual operation in space and time, that is, in existence. (ibid) Regarding the second demand, the Kantian solution is to assume a noumenal universe in which God, freedom and immortality reside, but essentially to restrict our access to this realm to faith and moral conviction. On this point, Schelling notes that regarding this metaphysical realm, Kant wants the same as the traditional metaphysics before him, but is so much convinced that for the achievement of this purpose there could be no other means than the ones which the previous metaphysics deployed – ratiocination, and essentially the ontological proof of God, as we

many of whom write books that hardly veil their philosophical nature – see for instance Lee Smolin’s *the Life of the Cosmos* (Smolin 1999) which explicitly develops a Leibnizian interpretation of contemporary physical cosmology, or also books like Julian Barbour’s *The End of Time: The Next Revolution in Physics* (Barbour 2001) which deploys a figure of thought derived from the philosophy of time in order to tackle problems posing themselves in contemporary theoretical physics. This development should be seen as a call for a new engagement from the side of philosophy with questions regarding the origin, history and purpose of the universe (the classical questions of *philosophical* cosmology, which precisely cannot be exhaustively answered from within physics alone but which yet pose themselves immanently in the process of physical investigation and theorisation). Unfortunately until now the call has only been answered by analytical philosophers and the rapidly growing field of ‘philosophy of cosmology’, but as could be expected from the analytical approach this field is essentially nothing more than the rigorous logical clarification of already given conceptions within physics, and thus precisely not what is needed: a an integrative philosophical cosmology.

have seen – that he ‘never even thought that there might be a different one [a different metaphysics]’. (ibid) The task of a post-critical metaphysics is precisely to respond to these two demands: to explain the genesis of nature, and to grasp and articulate the metaphysical universe.

As Schelling’s first independent philosophical writing – the recently edited and published *Timaeus Commentary* of 1794 – demonstrates, these two foundational demands of Schellingian philosophy, are articulated very early on from an engagement with Plato.⁶⁹ While due to its strongly Kantianising language, this very early text at first glance looks like a Kantian interpretation of Plato, in fact Schelling has here already found the exact points through which he is later able to Platonise or rather cosmologise the transcendental philosophy. In fact both the conceptual resources and the general character of the Schellingian metaphysics derive from a lifelong engagement with Plato and the Platonic tradition, and existential cosmology is well grasped as the attempt to think a Platonic cosmology after Kant, or rather, as regrounded on the ontological proof of chaos.⁷⁰ What the *Timaeus Commentary* of 1794 already shows, and what will remain Schelling’s abiding philosophical decision, is to think problems of transcendental constitution in terms of cosmological relations, and to go beyond the Kantian limitations precisely by regrounding elements of the transcendental apparatus on cosmological constructions, whereby Schelling seeks to find a remedy to both shortcomings of the Kantian philosophy and to find a genetic ground of nature in the metaphysical view of the universe. What for Plato is the order of οὐρανὸς, πᾶν or κόσμος,

⁶⁹ Since the philosophemes developed in the *Timaeus* commentary of 1794 (the same year in which Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre* appeared) essentially form the foundation of Schelling’s philosophy, and since they precede the Fichteanising writings of the Tübingen and Jena period, the common hypothesis regarding Schelling as a disciple of Fichte or as primarily a developer of Fichtean insights, can not be maintained. The true view is that Schelling and Fichte both set out from the Kantian ground, and despite a phase of cordial collaboration, develop distinct and fundamentally opposed systems and general visions of philosophy.

⁷⁰ A number of important studies on Schelling are powered by the exploration of the relation to Plato, chief among them the magisterial studies of Werner Beierwaltes such as *Idealismus und Platonismus*, (Beierwaltes 2004) but also, in a more speculative manner, works such as Wolfram Högbe’s *Prädikation und Genesis* (Högbe 1999) – *Schellings Weltalterphilosophie als Fundamentalheuristik* and Iain Hamilton Grant’s *Post-Kantian Philosophies of Nature after Schelling* (Grant 2008).

is for Schelling *die Welt, das Weltall, das All*, or *das Universum*, whereby Schelling from the beginning of his philosophising denotes the universe insofar as it can be thought (and not insofar as it can be empirically experienced). In the *Timaeus Commentary* Schelling finds the sought-after philosopheme in the Platonic view that ‘insofar it contains pure, originary and self-grounded form (of nature), insofar the world of representation [*die Welt der Vorstellung*] belongs to a higher capacity than mere sensuousness, and nature is exhibited as the typus of a higher world, which expresses the pure laws of this world’, thus concluding that ‘the visible world is grounded on a *κοσμος νοετος*’, whereby Schelling designates the typus of the higher world, or the metaphysical view of the universe, with a Neo-Platonic term derived from Philo. (T 31) But whereas the classical and rationalist metaphysics would simply proceed to deduce the properties of the metaphysical universe and propose them as necessary parameters of reality, the unique challenge posed to Schelling is to articulate the view of the *κοσμος νοετος*, or the holographic cosmology, on the basis of the collapse of classical metaphysics and based on the critique of cosmic reason.⁷¹ The second part of our study will investigate this endeavour in detail.

⁷¹ Hence we are not at all dealing with Schopenhauer’s or Natorp’s Kantianisation of Plato here. On the contrary Schelling’s entire effort aims at reactivating a thoroughly Platonic outlook after and beyond Kant, turning to Plato precisely in order to find a remedy for the philosophical errors of modernity in which Kant himself is still partially ensnared, while preserving Kant’s most crucial insights on an even higher level of generality than that reached by Kant himself. As opposed to the fundamental appropriation of Plato and Kant, which figure as the abiding and indispensable conditions of Schellingian philosophy, the engagements with Fichte, Spinoza, Plotinus, Bruno, Leibniz, Böhme, Aristotle and Hegel remain temporary episodes for Schelling even though in some of these Schelling develops an intensive affinity which borders on a creative fusion of his own thought with that of the philosophical partner. This tendency has traditionally led some commentators to hold that Schelling lacked originality or consistency. Schelling’s originality lies exactly in being able to become Fichte, Spinoza or Böhme and take on their expressive and ideational power without ever betraying any of his own philosophical decisions. Schelling’s manner of engaging with the history of philosophy is much closer to the Deleuzian buggery than to thinkers like Hegel or Heidegger who strictly maintain their distinctive posture and form of expression and thus turn every encounter into yet another differently flavoured confirmation of the same Hegelian or Heideggerian philosophemes.

To return to the question of generation, and its absence in Kant, to be sure, in the *Universal Natural History* of 1755 Kant had presented a scheme of stellar generation and corruption based purely on a universal system of forces and the Newtonian celestial mechanics – to this day accredited by physicists and historians of science as the foundation of modern physical cosmology, and one of the origins of the Kant-Laplace theory in cosmology, also known as the nebular hypothesis, according to which the accretion of stars takes place through the condensation of nebular gases. Yet the problem remains, as in the objectively deterministic account of nature provided by classical Newtonian physics, that there is no generation of novelty or true creativity.⁷² If location and momentum of every atom in the universe were known, Laplace's demon (who has infinite computational power at his disposal) could exactly predict the entire future of the universe, which is also true for the model presented in Kant's *Universal Natural History* in which the cyclical emergence of solar systems, and their dissolution and return to chaos, sparks a spiral of cosmic life in which the universe as a whole perpetually expands while an increasing number of local centres arise and diminish like a 'phoenix of nature, only burned up in order to live again, renewed once more from its ashes' (AA I 321). Despite the impressive catastrophic spectacle of the birth and demise of stars in Kant's physical cosmology, his rigidly objective matter remains incapable of giving birth to anything genuinely new (anything not already predictably entailed in any of its given states).

Kant eventually – through a return to his own early Leibnizian influence – attempts to remedy the internally static rigidity of his conception of matter in the *Metaphysical Grounds of Natural Science* of 1786 which searches for the transcendental conditions of matter and finds them in the activity of repulsive and attractive forces within matter, that in turn allow matter to act as 'that which fills space with motion' (see section on *Metaphysical Grounds of*

⁷² As Whitehead notes about the scholium to Newton's *Principia Mathematica*, 'the *Scholium* betrays its abstractness by affording no hint of that aspect of self-production, of generation, of φύσις, of *natura naturans*, which is prominent in nature. For the *Scholium*, nature is merely, and completely there, externally designed and obedient. The full sweep of the modern doctrine of evolution would have confused the Newton of the *Scholium*, but would have enlightened the Plato of the *Timaeus*.' (Whitehead 1979, p. 93). The affinities between Whitehead and Schelling go further than the evaluation of historical treatments of nature. In fact, after Schelling's *Ages of the World*, Whitehead's *Process and Reality* presents the next great modern rearticulation of Platonic cosmology, albeit under the conditions of 20th century quantum physics and relativity theory.

Dynamics, AA IV 496 ff.). Yet, despite laying the groundwork here for a dynamic conception of matter, the Kantian construction remains imprisoned in the discernment of conditions of possibility and cannot proceed to a thought of real genesis. It is, so to speak, only the possibility of a real genesis that is thought in Kant's transcendental philosophy of matter, but this possibility is not followed through to produce philosophically the generation of the various grades and types of phenomena as they present themselves in nature, let alone to unite this generation with the genesis of thought or of the transcendental forms of thought that are simply considered as given by Kant, without further grounding or deduction.⁷³ Schelling's philosophy is marked from the very beginning by the desire to actualise this latent possibility in Kant, and to articulate, on the basis of a speculative physics or *Naturphilosophie*, the universal process in which the world and with it all forms of thought emerge. Hence the credo of the *System of Transcendental Idealism* of 1800 where Schelling says: 'give me a nature of opposed activities and I will let intelligence and its entire system of representations emerge out of it', leading through epochs or periods unconscious development and finally into the construction of self-consciousness with its given forms of thought. (SW III 427)

But the *System* of 1800 (for a long time Schelling's best known work, although it is at best of intermediate importance in the Schellingian corpus) is only a contribution to a larger project in which the immensely prolific young Schelling sets out, in works like *Ideas for a*

⁷³ This is why, in an obituary written for Kant in 1804, Schelling emphasises the importance of Kant's metaphysics of matter, but laments Kant's inability to synthesise the latter with his critique of theoretical reason, which is why Kant's 'natural science could not become natural philosophy'. (SW V 18) Schelling here also hints at Kant's late manuscripts, published almost a century later (in 1884) as the *Opus Postumum*, in which an old Kant – under clear influence by the early Schellingian essays in natural philosophy, but unknown to Schelling – attempts to reground his critique of reason on a metaphysics of natural forces and attempts to respond to the necessity of a genetic deduction or construction of transcendental philosophy as it was generally raised by immediately post-Kantian thinkers, who themselves tried to target the problem of genesis in different ways: Reinhold and Fichte through a fundamental regrounding of the transcendental apparatus on a *Grundsatz* or foundational principle, Maimon through a reconception of spatial and temporal differences as objectively generative. Schelling's response can also be seen as a synthesis or co-articulation of these two approaches insofar as the Schellingian speculative physics is grounded on a foundational principle of antagonistic differentiation.

Philosophy of Nature of 1794, the *Darstellung meines Systems* of 1800, *Bruno* of 1802, *Fernere Darstellungen* of 1802, and especially the (Würzburg) *System of the Whole of Philosophy and Specifically of the Philosophy of Nature* of 1804, to gradually transform the basic conception of antagonistic forces – grasped by Schelling as expansion and contraction – into a fully fledged theory of cosmogenesis. This theory is the Schellingian *Potenzenlehre*, the doctrine of powers.⁷⁴ As Schelling's thought then develops through the sustained reflexions on the facticity and radical historicity of existence and on the necessity of chaos, the doctrine of powers is gradually rearticulated, in works like *Philosophy and Religion* of 1804, the *Freedom Essay* of 1809, the *Stuttgart Private Lectures* of 1810, and the *Ages of the World* of 1811-1815, and is turned from the device of a transcendental ontology into the principle of an existential cosmology. It is in this development, through which the doctrine of powers is progressively grounded on the ontological proof of chaos, that Schelling's philosophy is expanded from a transcendental contemplation of universal essences into the existential metaphysics of a self-generating universe grounded on nothing but the abyssal unground or the position of primal contingency (as we have argued above, the early function of the doctrine of powers is not abandoned but retained in the mature Schellingian philosophy). But it is especially the late works, after Schelling has fully developed his mature philosophy, where we find the most significant presentations of the doctrine of powers – which, while not modified or expanded any longer after the *Ages of the World*, is however considerably deepened through a new engagement with Plato and presented in a more didactic and extensive manner. Hence the best sources on the doctrine of powers are works such the *Initia*

⁷⁴ *Potenz*, Schelling's most important concept, is usually either translated as power or as potency. The former has the advantage of carrying the connotation of forces better (Schelling also speaks of the *Potenzen* as *Mächte*, which simply means powers) and moreover captures the reference to the mathematical conception of powers which is also not irrelevant for the concept (since each higher power is a potentiation of the lower one). Hence we generally use power for *Potenz* unless in singular cases in contexts where the use of power could be mistaken in a more quotidian sense – here we will use potency. The translation as power is also preferable for the same reason for which Spinoza's *potentia* is best translated as power and not as potentiality. Although Schelling's *Potenzen* are in fact potentials, they are already more than that since they exist not like abstract possibilities but like problematic realities. Moreover, Schelling himself gives us good reason to use the term power when in *On The World-Soul* of 1798 he himself translates the English term power, as used by a probably now forgotten Scottish thinker called John Brown, into the German as *Potenz*. (SW II 505)

Philosophiae Universae of 1821, the *Grounding of Positive Philosophy* of 1832, and the *Darstellung der reinrationalen Philosophie* (the philosophical introduction to the *Philosophy of Mythology*) of 1847, which we will read and present frequently – next to the *Timaeus Commentary* of 1794 – in our following reconstruction of the cosmogenetic process in Schelling's post-critical philosophy.

Generally, this metaphysical cosmogony breaks down into three crucial elements: 1) the doctrine of powers, 2) the doctrine of ideas, 3) the theory of time and eternity. Developing the thread from the first part of our study further, we will set out by a careful grounding of the cosmogonic process on the ontological proof of chaos and will then, on the basis of this foundation, reproduce the elements of the metaphysical cosmogony in a genetic progression. Since the doctrine of powers grounds the entire edifice of existential cosmology ontologically and gnoseologically, we will begin with its reconstruction, and will then proceed to a conjoined treatment of the doctrine of ideas and the theory of time. Our reconstructive task is made somewhat more difficult (however, also more challenging and thus perhaps more interesting) by the fact that no single systematic and complete (in the sense of systematically closed) presentation of Schelling's existential metaphysics exists. Schelling has left a large number of works which, at times fragmentary, at times only partial with regards to problematic focus, each produce some elements of the new metaphysics with varying emphases and strategic postures, and which like the works of Plato and unlike those of Aristotle or Hegel, have to be read like the dispersed parts of a great philosophical puzzle. However, if there is among the vast assemblage of Schellingian writings one central work, which despite its incompleteness, synthesises at least in synoptic form the main strands of Schelling's existential cosmology, it is the series of fragments of the *Weltalter* (the *Ages of the World*) of 1811-1815 – the work which amidst references to the 'divine Plato' (WA 20) or the 'supreme Plato' (WA 100) seeks to re-enact Plato's *Timaeus* and produce a modern version of the grand philosophical narrative or rather meta-narrative of the history of the universe. Our reconstruction of Schelling's existential cosmology will have to be guided by the *Ages of the World* and will have to always again return to the *Ages of the World*, eventually aiming at a new presentation of its central thesis as indispensable core of post-critical metaphysics. But just like the *Timaeus* on its own does not already deliver the metaphysical core of Platonic cosmology, the *Ages of World* is, if taken as a free standing work, far too cryptic to suffice for a reconstruction of Schelling's metaphysics, and should rather be seen (together with the connected *Freedom Essay*) as a holographic outline of

Schelling's project, rather than its full development.⁷⁵ Therefore we will continue our systematic reconstruction through ongoing supplementation and integration of the various late lectures and presentations, as it is only in the late lectures that Schelling provides a derivation of his existential philosophy and thereby grounds the existential cosmology of the *Freedom Essay* and the *Ages of the World* – which if read on their own may appear as abrupt or capricious – by fully explicating the systematic and historical basis of the post-critical cosmogony.

With regards to these late lectures it is of special interest in relation to the internal economy of our project and to the preceding critique of cosmic reason to note that Schelling's extensive discussions of Plato and Aristotle in the *Philosophy of Mythology* also aim explicitly at demonstrating that both Plato and Aristotle saw the limitations of purely negative and dialectical thought. In fact the thought of both Plato and Aristotle already is a form of metaphysical empiricism (despite they did not yet clearly grasp the existential distinction between thatness and whatness which only Medieval thought would be able to express forcefully and which would only reach its full philosophical maturity in Kant's critique). Schelling thus presents Hegel's professed continuity of Hegelian speculative dialectics to Platonic and Aristotelian thought as indefensible, and argues that the Hegelian speculative dialectics must rather be seen as a continuation of the *Scheinwissen* of the Eleatics, debunked

⁷⁵ The problem with the *Ages of the World* is not so much the fragmentary nature of the work but rather it is the mode of presentation of the *Ages of the World*, given that Schelling here attempts to write a modern epos, and a 'popular' work in which 'fable and truth' are once again reconciled, or which would convey the desired philosophical effect as much through aesthetic and symbolic force than through scientific, or dialectical persuasion. (SW VIII 207, SW VIII 200, also WA 63 on alternation between 'narrative form' and 'dialectical style'). As such, the *Ages of the World* is the closest Schelling ever comes to actually articulating the New Mythology. While this certainly makes for a sublime reading experience, the *Ages of the World* are notoriously difficult if not impossible to interpret adequately if read on their own – rather they should be read in conjunction with, or in fact after the didactic late lectures, as without these, what is in fact a most sophisticated philosophical reflexion, may appear like it was merely inspired mythopoesy. Contrary to the style of the *Ages of the World*, Schelling's lectures are of the highest clarity and precision, despite the often obscure problematics discussed and the complicated and protracted (and thus inherently, and not artificially, obscure) lines of thought presented.

and rejected by Socrates, Plato and Aristotle (see especially the 6th lecture of the *Philosophy of Revelation* of 1842 and the 15th lecture of the *Philosophical Introduction* to the *Philosophy of Mythology*). Already the *Ages of the World* speak of Plato, who is ‘dialectical throughout the series of his works, but becomes historical at the summit and last point of illumination’ [*im Gipfel und letzten Verklärungspunkt*] of his work and ‘returns to the integrity of history’ [*zur Einfalt der Geschichte zurückzukehren*] as an inspiration for the step from negative dialectics into the existential and the historical. (WA 8)

It is this step, the step into positive philosophy, forced by the terminal crisis of a negative philosophy yearning for existence, which our study will now enact in the transition from critique of cosmic reason to construction of post-critical cosmogony. Thus our study emulates a structure of presentation generally encountered in Schelling’s Munich and Berlin cycles, and explicitly labelled, in the *Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, the regressive and the progressive movement in philosophy. (PP 389 ff) While the regressive movement sets out from reality and proceeds negatively, driving the process of thought deeper and deeper towards the ground, the progressive movement proceeds from the attained ground and ‘concretes with experience’ [*concretisiert mit der Erfahrung*] through the gradual construction of reality which can thus not be ‘a necessary progression’ but must be developed in ‘the free progress’, proceeding only ‘in free thought’ and ‘requiring experience as proof’. ⁷⁶ (Pa 414) Hence the transition from part I to part II in our study also broadly corresponds to the transition from negative to positive philosophy. While the logic of the first part is entirely

⁷⁶ To be sure, the paradigm for this method as grounding of metaphysics lies in the Cartesian Meditations, the foundation of modern rationalist metaphysics, where Descartes proceeds regressively up to reaching the ground of rationalist metaphysics – the ontological proof of God, that is, the metaphysical and not the gnoseological ground, without the former the latter (the cogito) would be incapable of attaining certainty regarding the structures of the cosmos – and proceeds progressively from that point into a reconstruction of the basic parameters of the world. It is only appropriate for Schelling’s foundation of post-critical metaphysics to mirror this general methodological structure since the intended results are similar. The Schellingian philosopher Rainer Zimmermann has recently presented in his *System des Transzendentalen Materialismus* (Zimmermann 2004) an interesting contemporary attempt to emulate the regressive-progressive structure, also pointing out that it can also be encountered in Sartre’s regressive-progressive method described in the *Question of Method* essay at the beginning of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. (Sartre 1985)

prescribed by the immanent necessity of the problematic of the ontological proof, necessarily ending in the ontological proof of chaos as logical endpoint of the conceptual development, the second part is a free process of construction grounded on the ontological proof of chaos but pursuing a free development towards the facticity of experience. About such a speculative philosophy of facticity, Schelling says:

‘The positive philosophy is aprioristic empiricism. The experience towards which it progresses is the whole of experience. The positive philosophy is nothing but the perpetually progressing, always growing proof; just as reality is never closed, so also the proof is not. This whole philosophy (hence philosophia, because it is a striving for wisdom), is only an always proceeding knowledge [*eine immer nur fortgehende Erkenntnis*], and only for those a proof who want to think further [*die Fortdenkendwollenden*]... While the negative philosophy is a closed system, the positive philosophy is not a system in this sense.’ (Pa 414)

We are hence leaving the closed systematicity of logical procession and are entering the terrain of the open system, the cosmological scheme in the precise sense used by Whitehead, no longer driven by the immanent necessity of the conceptual development but by the free and wild creation of concepts (to use Stengers’ expression) which is the terrain of speculative empiricism. It is important to stress again at this point – counter-acting a common misunderstanding about a supposed epistemological rupture in Schelling, or more generally between rational and empirical philosophy – that the progression to positive philosophy does not render negative philosophy obsolete (this is why Whitehead’s superior empiricism is supplemented by an experimental rationalism, Benjamin’s messianic empiricism supplemented by a dialectic of the image, Deleuze’s political ontology supplemented by a logic of sense). On the contrary, a philosophy of facticity continues to draw on negative philosophy and will always by necessity contain substantial portions that are negative, insofar as without the thought of essences and the pure ether of possibilities it is not possible to think the unfolding of actuality.⁷⁷ Schelling says that negative philosophy is ‘the philosophy for

⁷⁷ Hence Schelling’s early system outlines of the years 1800-1804, such as the *Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie*, *Fernere Darstellungen*, and the *Würzburg System*, and crucially, also considerable and essential sections of the late philosophy, such as the *Presentation of the Purely-Rational Philosophy* of 1847-1852 (*‘die reinrationale Philosophie’*) are explicit presentations of negative philosophy, or of the thought of essences.

school' while positive philosophy is 'the philosophy for life' [*Jene ist die Philosophie für die Schule, die andere für das Leben*], which does not mean that the former is obsolete but rather that it is of a subordinate or preparatory role for the latter, or in Schellingian terminology, the former is the *prius* (the more fundamental) while the latter is the *superius* (the more significant or decisive). (Pa 423)

The point is that in Schelling the thought of essences must always lead into the facticity of the extra-essential and non-rational event or decision. Positive philosophy needs and relies on negative philosophy like life relies on thought, while however negative philosophy could be (and in fact is often, particularly in academic settings) presented as a self-standing – but entirely lifeless – endeavour of pure thought.

Proto-Logic: The Powers of Chaos

As demonstrated in the first part, the critique of cosmic reason produces the immanent collapse of a purely rational philosophy that seeks to deduce existence from within the ether of logical essences and forces a decision for immediate facticity, even though from within negative philosophy this positivity can only appear as an unprethinkable outside. This collapse, this decision and forced scission, this κρίνειν and κρίσις, is the true meaning of *Kritik*, unbeknown to or only dimly felt by Kant himself, it is the ‘κρίσιν τοῦ τὰ ὄντα’ of the *Sophistes* which explodes the Parmenidean sphere and opens the view unto the μὴ ὄν and unto the ὄντος ὄν, unto that which is but is relatively not, and that which is without any relativity or reflexivity. (*Sop.* 242c) Schelling says:

‘Kant calls his philosophy a critical one, and if he had truly brought it to that crisis, it should well carry that name. But [his philosophy] is merely a beginning to the real crisis [*ein Anfang zur eigentlichen Krisis*], because when Kant for example says that with the forms of our finite understanding we cannot cognise the supra-sensuous, divine, so he is entirely right and has yet said nothing beyond what is rather self-evident. What he constantly presupposes here is that it would have to be these forms through which it should be cognised, if it could be cognised.’ (SW IX 243)

Now the question of the post-critical cosmogony – which is in this sense not beyond or after *Kritik* but grounded on *Kritik*, emerging from *Kritik* – is to do what Kant did not, to dwell on the crisis and explicate with force and persistence that which follows from the ontological proof of chaos which is always also an ontological proof of crisis, and to explicate the generative powers through which a world emerges yet again out of the abyss of chaos. The question is to articulate a translogical empiricism of existence grounded on the experience of *Krisis* or *Scheidung* (scission, used synonymously for *Krisis* by Schelling) – the foundational concept of existential cosmology.⁷⁸ Not only because, as Schelling says in the *Ages of the World*, the philosopher requires a ‘*Scheidungskunst*’ (an art of scission or a critical art) to separate ‘the false from the true, the erroneous from the right’ and to separate himself from

⁷⁸ We speak of an experience of crisis. The logical experience has been conclusively and stringently produced in the first part of this study. The second part builds upon its existential experience.

‘the concepts and the attributes of his time’. (WA 5) But because the act of scission, the lived and experienced crisis in which a part of the self splits away and is excised from another – this crisis which is the ground of consciousness and of life, of the I that is another and that contains in it something it is not – is at once the generative ground of universal vital impulse and the principle of all knowledge. Thus Schelling insists in the *Ages of the World*:

‘This whole knowledge is only a constant and never ceasing generation, such that it can never become a dead possession. It is the internal repeating and emulating [*nachbildende*] of that great monstrous process of all life [*des ungeheuren Prozesses allen Lebens*] from its first still beginning unto the present, and yes into the furthest future. But how many have enough force, capacity, self-overcoming, [*Selbstverläugnung*] to enter into this process. Because without hard internal struggle, without scission [*Scheidung*] of the self from oneself, the truth cannot be won. Even to theoretically accompany it is not enough. Who has not practically experienced the process of all life as it is described in the present book, will never grasp it.’ (WA 102)

We are still far from fully illuminating it fully, yet slowly but surely, we are approximating Schelling’s dark dictum from the last draft of the *Ages of the World* that ‘the one who could write the history of his own life from the bottom up, would thus also have grasped the history of the universe in a brief complexus.’ (SW VIII 207) What Schelling finds in the crisis is the ground of all cosmogony, biogony and logogenesis, the battle between the unprethinkable decision that is all life – the utter contingency and ungroundedness which carries each and every existence, each and every life – and the striving of this decision to know itself and to have itself. We can recognise the great discovery of Fichte here, which Schelling appropriates and never abandons, that the primacy of the practical must be articulated within the theoretical and must effectively ground the cognitive apparatus and not be added as a dead weight to it. The Schellingian foundation of post-critical metaphysics retains precisely the element of practical or experiential transformation from Fichte (while abandoning the intra-reflexive logical circularity in favour of a trans-reflexive empiricism). Yet what remains in Fichte articulated within the bounds of consciousness, is in Schelling, via Hölderlin, precisely that which is outside of consciousness, which always precedes all consciousness, and on which all consciousness is grounded: the ‘highest point’ of transcendental philosophy, the original synthetic apperception of Kant, is itself not located within consciousness but in a radically pre-reflexive scission that precedes and generates consciousness. (AA B136) Insofar as – in

the absence of a metaphysical principle of sufficient reason – every single being lives this, or rather *is* this, position of pure contingency and facticity, there is in each consciousness something (it may be hidden, forgotten or submerged) of the unground of all being. It is this remnant of the *Urzufall*, of the primal contingency, which is unearthed and laid bare in the experience of life and of the radical decision, and this unearthing is the real *Scheidekunst*, the real art of crisis, which is the condition for true philosophy and for the vision of the cosmographic scheme.

Crisis is the *πάθος* of philosophy, that in which philosophy lives and that through which it is possible ('the tender Plato speaks mildly of an astonishment', INI 9). Here, in the experience of crisis, Schelling finds the locus for the gnoseological foundation of the post-critical cosmogony, which takes the form of a critical rearticulation of the Platonic doctrine of memory, the doctrine of ἀνάμνησις – articulated in the early Schelling as intellectual intuition, in the late Schelling as *Ekstasis* (ecstasy) and in the *Ages of the World* as *Mitwissenschaft* (complicit or co-knowledge).⁷⁹ As it is articulated in the *Ages of the World*, 'From the source of things and equal to it, the human soul has a complicit knowledge [*eine Mitwissenschaft*] of creation. In it lies the highest clarity of things, and it is not so much knowing but knowledge itself [*die Wissenschaft selbst*].' (SW VIII 200) This principle of knowledge of the cosmic generation, the only genuine and authentic principle of knowledge in the human being, is nothing but the complicity in the primal contingency which every being shares with the universe. This primal contingency can be thought as absolute freedom, since it is the freedom to be or not to be.⁸⁰ Through the principle of contingent reason any

⁷⁹ Particularly from *Phaedon*, in which to see the things as they are for themselves, αὐτῇ καὶ αὐτῇ, it is necessary to see them through the psyche, τῇ ψυχῇ θεατέον αὐτὰ τὰ πράγματα, which in turn is only possible through ἀνάμνησις. (*Pha.* 66e, *Pha.* 76a-79d).

⁸⁰ The central claim of the *Freedom Essay* is exactly that freedom – despite its speculative indifference to necessity on the level of essential being – must originally or existentially be thought without any necessity, hence not as the freedom to conform to the law of either a moral or a historical necessity, such as generally thought in German Idealism (by Kant, Fichte and Hegel) but as the entirely contingent freedom to be or not to be, or to decide between mutually exclusive realities. Therefore the *Freedom Essay* says that 'the real and living concept of freedom is the capacity for good or evil'. (SW VII 352) Once freedom is thought as this pure choice it becomes comprehensible how the primal contingency of the unground (to be or not to be) can be thought as absolute freedom. It is in this sense that the primal being

singular being or also the universe as a whole could as well not be, without any logical or metaphysical necessitation whatsoever. Like the universe itself, every single being is the product of this absolute freedom or primal position. Existential cosmology is a thoroughly critical philosophy, however it is critical in a much more profound sense than denoting mere epistemological criticism. The *Kritik* or rather the *Krisis* that is the cataclysm of reason in its doomed attempts to grasp and exhaust its own ground and erect its conclusive epistemic system on an evident necessity, is the motion which despite or rather precisely through its very failure produces the ground of a true knowledge of universal life. We must enter deeper into this paradoxon in order to comprehend the possibility of existential cosmology and in order to retrace the genesis of the cosmogenetic powers. The strongest explication of the principle of complicit knowledge is delivered by Schelling in the lecture course known as *Initia Philosophiae Universae* of 1821. In this text (it exists both as full text in Schelling's *Nachlass* and as lecture transcript by students) Schelling begins the explanation of the notion of *Mitwissenschaft* like this:

,It is an ancient doctrine that same can only be cognised by same. The cogniser must be like the cognised and the cognised like the cogniser: hence the eye is also similar to the light following that saying which Goethe entered into the preface to his *Theory of Colours*:

,*Wär' nicht das Auge sonnenhaft,
Wie könnten wir das Licht erblicken?
Lebt' nicht in uns des Gottes eigne Kraft,
Wie könnt' uns Göttliches entzücken?*'

can also be understood as pure will, for the will is that which can either be or not be. Accordingly, the famous statement of the *Freedom Essay*: 'In the last and highest instance there is no other being than willing. Willing is primal being [*Wollen ist Urseyn*], and on this alone all of its predicates fit: groundlessness, eternity, independence of time, self-affirmation.' (SW VII 350) It is clear that Schopenhauer and Nietzsche were readers of Schelling, yet what strongly distinguishes Schelling from the later metaphysics of the will is that for Schelling the will may be primal being but is not its own end, it may be the prius but it is not the superius. The end, the final purpose, like for Hegel, is for him the actualisation of the Absolute in history and the redemption of history.

(Would the eye not be sunlike,
 How could we see the light?
 Would the God's own force not live in us,
 How could the divine delight us?)

Here, we are not dealing with a historical knowledge of that movement, but a complicit knowledge [*eine Mitwissenschaft*], *conscientia*. Thus it follows that in us there is something similar and equal to that eternal freedom – even more determinate: that eternal freedom itself must be in us, it must be the cogniser of itself.’⁸¹ [quoted from SW IX 221]

⁸¹ Goethe is here poetically rendering a parable which derives from Plotinus and expresses the central Platonic doctrine of the speculative identity (or likeness, which is not an absolute or unqualified identity) of the knower and the known. (See GW 70-71, *Enneads* I. 6 [I] 9., *Tim* 45b-c) Schelling already appropriates this central doctrine in the *Timaeus* commentary of 1794, and later generally sets out from this position in order to conclude or deduce the Spinozist homology and homomorphism of thought and extension, such as in the Würzburg *System of the Whole of Philosophy* of 1804 which begins in §1 with the Platonic proposition that ‘it is one and the same that knows there and that is known there’, and deduces out of this position in §270 the Spinozist speculative indifference of the ideal and real: ‘the real and the ideal are only different perspectives [*verschiedene Ansichten*] of one and the same substance.’ (SW VI 137, SW VI 500) – compare to *Ethics* II Prop. VII *scholium*. (Spinoza, 1986) This Spinozist vision of the speculative identity of nature and spirit consistently remains at the very heart of Schelling’s position and is, for instance, reiterated in the *Grounding of Positive Philosophy* of 1831 where Schelling still calls the proposition ‘like the cognised, like the cogniser’ [*Wie das Erkannte, so auch das Erkennende*], ‘the only [proposition] which is self-evident’ and ‘the axiom of science’. (PP 105) As we have developed above at great length, the point for Schelling is and always was – against Hegel – that this identity is an identity of essence, not one of position or existence. Where Schelling feels to go beyond Spinoza in this regard, is that in Spinoza it is an accidental fact which depends on the cognitive capacities of humans that substance is perceived under two modes, while substance in itself could have an infinity of modes. Schelling attributes this dwelling in the accidental, sharing Hegel’s similar critique of Spinoza on this point, to the static nature of Spinoza’s Absolute in which the identity of modes is not posited through crisis and freedom, as in Schelling himself, but

As we see, *Mitwissenschaft* (a neologism invented by Schelling) is in fact the direct translation of the Latin *conscientia* from which the English consciousness derives, into German. Thus we are not only dealing with a principle in consciousness, but with the very nature of consciousness which is to have this *con-scientia* or complicit knowledge of creation or of that eternal freedom to be or not to be, the unprethinkable contingency, the absolute position of existence. But we ask how it can come to be that this sheer and pure position, without any further determination can be that which in us is the 'cogniser of itself'? Are we not imputing far too much to this facticity, and as it were, by the backdoor, reenter unwarranted assumptions into that which we cannot disclose positively? Are we not repeating the Hegelian gesture by purporting to take something as immediate and irreflexive which under closer inspection then turns out to be always already mediated and implicitly known? The answer to these questions is that, as we noted above, it is not the position or the contingency – what Schelling here calls the eternal freedom – which knows itself directly but it is precisely the *failure* of the being of contingency to know its own contingency which produces the knowledge, or what rather should be called the meontic non-knowledge which is not but is not an absolute nothing. The essence of the human is precisely to be this freedom, to be this contingency, and even to be the knowing of this contingency – but to not know it.⁸² (SW IX 228) This is why Schelling can say of philosophy that it is 'free action of spirit' and that 'its first step is not a knowing, but rather an explicit non-knowing, a giving up of all knowing', a movement which, in the Dante epitaph above we identified with a kind of speculative death. (ibid) It is worth quoting a passage from *Initia Philosophia Universae* at

immediately supposed. Spinoza is thus for Schelling a 'closed bud which must still unfold to become a flower.' (PP 32 I 72)

⁸² Despite the considerable parallels between Schelling and Sartre, or more generally Schelling's position as forerunner or grandfather of modern existentialism (on the question of the pre-reflexive decision, the primacy of existence, the ungroundedness of existence, and so on) there is yet a crucial difference between Schelling and 'existentialists proper', and this is precisely that for Schelling the human being is *essentially* exactly not just his radically ungrounded existence but the virtual knowledge of the possibility of the messianic or eschatological redemption of all existence. If Schelling is the grandfather of existentialism then Kierkegaard is surely its father. With the publication of Kierkegaard's notes taken at the 1841 lectures in Berlin, the point of transition from preparation to inception can now be retraced quite exactly.

some length since Schelling gives here a careful account of the crisis in which the non-knowing and ecstatic knowledge is generated.

‘By making that original freedom an object, by wanting to bring it to knowledge, the following necessary contradiction emerges: he [the human] wants to know and feel the eternal freedom, but by making it an object, [*indem er sie zum Gegenstand macht*] it turns to non-freedom under his eyes, [*unter der Hand*] and yet he seeks and wills it as freedom. Thus in the inwardness of the human being a circulation results, a rotatory movement, in which the human searches perpetually for the freedom that always escapes. This inward circulation is the state of the most terrifying doubt, the eternal unrest. Not only freedom ceases, but also the one who wants to know it is in the state of the highest unfreedom – in perpetual tension against the freedom that he eternally searches, and that perpetually escapes. This tension which takes place on the side of the human (tensionlessness = freedom) reaches finally its highest point, an ἀκμή which must result in discharge whereby that which wanted to make itself the knower of the eternal freedom in itself, is ejected – set into the periphery – is made the non-knowing simpliciter [*zum schlechterdings Nichtwissenden*]. Now only he is well again. But this crisis is only the beginning, the condition of the actual process which shall now be described. Namely through this decision there are now posited two, on the one side our consciousness in the state of absolute non-knowing, on the other the absolute subject, which now emerges as eternal freedom to consciousness and expresses itself as that which the other does not know.’ (SW IX 231)

The being of contingency cannot know the contingency that is its own absolute position since every attempt to know it turns it into an object, whereas the unprethinkable position can not be this object, it is the sheer freedom to posit and as such, an absolute subject without any objectivity. What was in the logical movement the cataclysm of a reason incapable of exhausting and attaining its own ground, is in the existential and biographic movement the incapacity of the human being to attain and have his own freedom or ungroundedness. The more the human being chases his freedom the more unfree he becomes. The rotary movement, incapable of the kind of self-grounding which Hegel’s vertiginously circulatory reason promises, is only resolved through a crisis, an acme and cataclysm, elsewhere Schelling says an explosion, through which that which seeks to know is thrown into the periphery, becomes ecstatic to itself. This is the *Ekstasis*, the constitutive being-out-of-itself of thought through

which thought is only a meontic being and moves in the ether of that which is not and does never attain that which emphatically is (Schelling refers to the root of the Latin *existo* in ἐξίσταμαι and of *existentia* in ἔκστασις, corroborating the thesis of the ecstatic nature of human existence, INI 92).⁸³ But now, after the acme and the decision, we not any longer have one (the freedom to be or not to be) neither two (the freedom to be or not to be and that which is not this freedom) but three (the freedom to be or not to be, that which is not this freedom, and that which appears as the freedom to that which is not the freedom), or we have the primal position and we have a subject and an object.

As Schelling also says, we have now the primal freedom and we have an *Urstand* and a *Gegenstand*. (INI 122, PP 408 ff., SW XII 170, and passim) The *Gegenstand* (the object) is that which stands against or upon and has thus stability and effectivity. The *Urstand* (a word coined by Schelling, impossible to translate except through direct transliteration as in 'primal stand' or through the creation of neologisms like 'proto-ject') is the υποκείμενον, substratum or subject on which the object can come to stand and acquire stability, but which is itself non-objective and relatively non-being in relation to the object.⁸⁴ The absolute subject of eternal freedom, since it cannot be known, posits that which wants to know it but cannot, and that as which it itself is not known. Hence we have now reached a construction of those

⁸³ The paradigmatic study of this Schellingian figure of thought remains Courtine's *Exstase de la Raison*. (Courtine 1990)

⁸⁴ Since the subject is always only a subject in relation to something it is not, Schelling also says that its being (rather its meontic non-being) is always 'transitive', always borrowed and relative. (PP 137, XIII 72, and passim) What governs Schelling's thought here is the conception that there is a primal subject or absolute freedom, which however can never be known or is always already past and gone. What can be known is always only that which this absolute subject is not, namely the relative subject. While the *Ages of the World* gives the paradigmatic but highly cryptic presentation of the universal genetic process, Schelling gives similar but more extensive and also slightly differently weighted presentations of the process in the *Initia Philosophiae Universae*, the *Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, the *Philosophy of Mythology*, the *Philosophy of Revelation*, and also in the *Presentaiton of the Natural Process*. Once full translations appear it will be possible to gauge in the Anglo-American discourse the importance of Schelling's contribution also with regards to a transcendental ontology of objectivity and subjectivity, a contribution which is not less significant than those of Fichte or Hegel.

kinds of being which we encountered earlier as introduced by way of the Platonic ontology. We have the absolute subject, the ὄντως ὄν (*das Seiende selbst*) of the unprethinkable position, which is that which philosophy wills and wants but cannot know or rather, in the non-knowing knowledge of which philosophy (as perpetual striving, as love of the striving) consists. We have the mere ὄν (*das Sein*) or the object as which the absolute subject is posited by that which wants to know the absolute subject but only ever gets to know an object. And we have the μὴ ὄν (*das Nichtseiende*) which wants to know the absolute subject but only ever gets to grasp an object, and which relates to the absolute subject like a non-knowing which is its own being. The possibility of philosophy lies in this impossibility, giving rise to the Socratic knowing of non-knowing, or the non-knowing knowledge of the unprethinkable (an ignorando cognoscitur but not a docta ignorantia!) which is a non-relational, non-conceptual, non-knowledge, precisely because it is the knowledge of pure freedom or that which can be or not be, but is not already – ‘a great moment, the real birth hour of philosophy.’ (SW IX 237) This genetic process – the rearticulation of the Fichtean foundation in which the decision is now grasped as a fundamentally trans-reflexive element – is at the very core of Schelling’s existential cosmology. It allows us to grasp how precisely the identity or indifference of the ideal and the real is to be understood as merely one of essence and not of existence.

For this purpose Schelling introduces what can be called the existential proposition, the Schellingian counterpart to Hegel’s speculative proposition. The basic logic of the existential proposition is presented in the *Freedom Essay* of 1809 (although the distinction between existence and the ground of existence on which it rests, is older and dates back to the *Darstellung* of 1800), it is then explained more carefully in the *Stuttgart Private Lectures* of 1810 and then finally becomes the logical heart-piece of all the *Ages of the World* fragments, and thus of the whole Schellingian existential cosmology. In the *Freedom Essay*, Schelling introduces the problematic in the context of the overarching question of the identity of nature and spirit in response to the Kantian third antinomy. As we know for Kant the antinomy of nature and freedom can only be solved by radically separating the two spheres and delivering empirical nature to thorough determination by mechanical laws while protecting freedom in a non-substantial and entirely subjective (but yet practically certain) zone. In order to overcome the unmediated duality it is necessary to think, in some sense, substance and subject as identical – the professed intention of both Schelling and Hegel. Now, for Schelling the ‘two extremes of philosophy’, the two extreme possibilities of this thought of the identity of

substance and subject are provided by Spinoza (who reduces the subject to substance and necessity) and Fichte (who reduces the substance to subject and freedom). (PP 185 ff.) We know that for both Hegel and Schelling these are unacceptable solutions, and that each attempts to think a *speculative* identity of nature and spirit that is not an immediate identity or a reduction of one to the other. The crucial question is how this speculative identity is thought. Schelling says in the *Freedom Essay* (regarding the accusation of his own *Naturphilosophie* of proclaiming the sameness of nature and spirit):

‘The reason for such misinterpretations, which other systems have also richly experienced, lies in the general misunderstanding of the law of identity or the sense of the copula in judgment. Although it is like making a child understand that in no possible proposition, which according to the accepted explanation expresses the identity of the subject with the predicate, there is a sameness [*Einerleiheit*] or even just an immediate connection of these two – thus e.g. the proposition: this body is blue, does not have the sense that this body is through that in which and through which it is a body, also blue, but merely that the same which is this body, is, albeit not in the same regard, also blue: hence this presupposition, that demonstrates an entire ignorance of the essence of the copula, has been persistently applied in our times to the higher application of the law of identity.’ VII 341

If we say that spirit is identical to nature we are not saying that spirit is the same as nature, but rather that that which is nature is also (in a different regard) spirit. The two identicals are not even ‘immediately connected’ but rather there is something – a third – which is both of them. The *Freedom Essay* continues:

‘This principle does not express a unity that turns in the circle of sameness, not progressively, and hence itself unperceptive and unliving. The identity of the law is an immediately creative one. In the relation of subject to predicate we have already shown that of ground to consequence, and the principle of the ground [*Satz des Grundes*] is thus as originary as that of identity. The eternal must hence be immediately, and how it is in itself, be ground.’ (SW VII 346)

This is a crucial point, made in 1809, which de facto already contains the crux of Schelling’s late critique of Hegel’s *Science of Logic*, before the latter had even been written. The principle

of sufficient reason (in German called the principle of the ground, *Satz des Grundes*, or *Satz vom Grunde*) is ‘as originary’ as the living and creative identity, it is ‘immediately’ posited. Now, the point here is that the ground or sufficient reason is not, as in Hegel, the result of the self-negation of the determinations of reflexion (in the transition from contradiction to ground in the second book of the *Logic*) but it is an original an immediate position. Thus the ground is not gained intra-logically through the cancellation of all relata in reflexion (which should simply leave a κένωσις and an inexistence instead of a ground that propels the movement of the *Logic* into existence) but it must be thought as an original, extra-reflexive and extra-logical position without which the identity would not be. About this unprethinkable ground, this Hölderlinian *Seyn*, that is the position of the logical relation, the *Freedom Essay* says: ‘there must be before all ground and all existing, and thus all duality, a being; how could we call it but the *Urgrund* [primal ground] or much rather *Ungrund* [unground]?’ (SW VII 406) We see already that the principle of the ground is in Schelling always a principle of the unground, the principle of sufficient reason always a principle of contingent reason. But let us see how the *Ages of the World* eventually deploys the existential proposition as its own proto-logical (since pre-logical and generative of the logical) core:

‘The bond in the judgment is never merely a part of it, even if, as was supposed, the most exquisite part, but rather it is its entire being [*sein ganzes Wesen*], and the judgment is really [*eigentlich*] only the unfolded bond itself; the true sense of each judgment, e.g. of the most simple one, A is B, is really [*eigentlich*] thus: that, which is A, is that which is also B, where it is shown that the bond grounds both the subject and the predicate. There is no simple unity here, but one that is redoubled [*mit sich selbst verdoppelt*] with itself, or an identity of identity. In the proposition, A is B, is contained, firstly the proposition A is X (that same which is not always called by name, of which subject and predicate are both predicates); secondly the proposition, X is B; and only thereby, that these two are again connected, hence through reduplication of the bond, thirdly the proposition A is B emerges.’ (WA I 28)

With this development – it can be seen as Schelling’s anticipation of what in modern logic (and particularly due to the general modal bent of Schelling’s proto-logic, in post-Kripkean modal logic) is the function of the existential quantifier, denoted in this case by $\exists x, xA \wedge xB$ (there is an X such that X is A and X is B) – Schelling has articulated an existential alternative to Hegel’s essential speculative proposition. It is not that A is B (first order reflexion) because

on deeper reflexion B is A (second order reflexion), and that this is so is C (third order reflexion), but rather in reflexion A is B because there is an irreflexive X that is A and that is B. Since this is taken as the metaphysical or fundamental interpretation of speculative identity, the genesis of speculative logic, in fact of *all* logic, is itself grounded on an extra-logical decision and cannot be deduced from within logic.⁸⁵ Thus if for Hegel the speculative identity of nature and spirit essentially breaks down into an identity of different orders of reflexion (of which the highest is pure spirit or absolute idea), for Schelling the speculative identity of nature and spirit means that nature is spirit because there is an X which is nature and this X is also spirit, or expressed differently through an example deployed by Manfred Frank: my mind is my brain but not because mind is reducible to brain or because the brain is in some way an instantiation of the mind (reductionism, either materialist or idealist), nor because my brain is the externalised or self-alienated expression of a higher logical reality

⁸⁵ In 20th century work on the foundations of logic this insight has been confirmed by Spencer-Brown's seminal *Laws of Form*, (Spencer-Brown 1994) a book that responds to the crisis in the foundations of formalisation in the wake of the discoveries of the logical paradoxes, the failure of Hilbert's formalist program, and Gödel's incompleteness proof, by regrounding all formal language and thus mathematics itself, on a non-mathematical or proto-logical calculus of distinctions. The parallels of Spencer-Brown's *Laws of Form* with Schelling's proto-logic of scission are striking and productive synergies between the two must be studied and developed carefully. Spencer-Brown describes his own project thus: 'The theme of this book is that a universe comes into being when a space is severed or taken apart. The skin of a living organism cuts off an outside from an inside. So does the circumference of a circle in a plane. By tracing the way we represent such a severance, we can begin to reconstruct, with an accuracy and coverage that appear almost uncanny, the basic forms underlying linguistic, mathematical, physical and biological science, and can begin to see how the familiar laws of our own experience follow inexorably from the original act of severance.' Spencer-Brown (1969) p. xxii, While the book has been hailed by the late Bertrand Russell as an unprecedented achievement not seen since Euclid's *Elements*, and while a few (mostly German) theorists, chief among them Niklas Luhmann, have appropriated Spencer-Brown's proto-logic in the context of a more general theoretic project (that of a general theory of social systems in Luhmann's case) the reception outside of restricted circles has yet to occur. It is also possible to see in Spencer-Brown's *Laws of Form* a systematisation of crucial proto-logical insights of French philosophies of difference.

(Hegel) but rather because there is an actual occurrence, a real extra-logical event or decision called X, which is my mind and this X is also my brain (Schelling).⁸⁶

Returning to our problematic of the crisis and to the emergent kinds of being, the real and the ideal are identical in the way that $A = B$, one is an object or the simple ὄν, the other is the subject or the μὴ ὄν, but *that* they are identical is neither given in their own relation, nor in the cancellation or self-negation of that relation, but in an unrelational position by the X, the ὄντος ὄΝ. It is this X, a being purely of the order of decision, which emphatically IS, while all other being only has a borrowed or derivative existence.⁸⁷ It is in fact the grounding but ungrounded decision, called in the *Freedom Essay* 'the ground of existence' as opposed to existence itself, that reduplicates itself in the crisis (and is explicated in judgment) in order to

⁸⁶ We have here also Schelling's processual or existential rearticulation of Spinoza's identity of thought and extension, or of the ideal and the real, as presented in Schelling's works such as the Würzburg *System of the Whole of Philosophy* of 1804 which, besides the stylistic affinity (being written *more geometrico*), can be read as Schelling's attempt to post-critically rewrite Spinoza's philosophy of psychophysical powers. Schelling's *Potenzen*, first articulated just after Schelling had discovered Spinoza and had, according to a letter to Hegel become 'a Spinozist', can also be seen as a rearticulation of the Spinozian *potentia*.

⁸⁷ We say what emphatically is, is always of the order of decision for Schelling. What *eigentlich* is, is neither material nor ideal, but only and always the scission, the crisis, the decision. Once again we see the proximity to Fichte in the use of the X for the decision, which however, as we pointed out is now longer a transcendental act of consciousness but an unconscious act of cosmogenesis. We must not mistake the decision for the psychological or empirical decision, for that trivial management question dealt with in ubiquitous guides to 'decision-making'. Rather what is meant is the ontological κρίσις, the scission in which reality emerges in the same instance in that it breaks up and shatters, and in which all life takes shape as a creative destruction, thus what we are referring to with Schelling's concept of scission is pure process to speak with Whitehead or the pure event to speak Deleuzian. However, it is of course true that for Schelling we have a unique and absolutely privileged insight into the cosmogenetic operation of crisis in the existential experience of decision – not the everyday decision of whether to do something or not, to go somewhere or not, of whether to be with someone or not, but the one fundamental decision (and there is only one for each metaphysical entity, for each life) that unprethinkably decides one's character – and of which all everyday decisions are merely echoes.

generate the identity in duplicity. The position of the X, itself of the order of the event and of existence, reduplicates into the logical relation of A to B that in turn is to be thought as a relation of essence.⁸⁸ It is highly significant that Schelling calls the X also ‘the bond’, (*das Band*) and the position of the duplicity, a ‘reduplication of the bond’. (ibid) After the post-critical rearticulation of Platonic memory, we see here at the heart of Schelling’s existential cosmology (the *Freedom Essay* and the *Ages of the World*) the articulation of another key theorem that Schelling appropriates already in the *Timaeus Commentary* of 1794 from Plato, namely the theory of the psychic or soulful bonds – the δεσμοῖς τε ἐμψύχοις – that bring all nature into life. (*Tim.* 38e) This desmotic or also syndesmotic bond (in the *Politeia*, as cosmic bond of togetherness, σύνδεσμον τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, *Pol.* 616c) is what in the *Timaeus*, unites and holds together the visible and the intelligible universe as harmonic cosmos. (*Tim.* 32a-32c) In the context of the Kantian transcendental philosophy in which Schelling reads and appropriates the *Timaeus*, the cosmic bond, grasped as the eventual position of the X, is exactly the missing link between the contingent givenness of nature or of existence and the necessity of the transcendental forms.

The decision, or the event of *Krisis*, posits reality in the very same movement in which it reduplicates itself and breaks into the unprethinkable past of the position on the one hand, and the dichotomy of subject and object on the other hand. This is a crucial point as in it lies the key to an understanding of how the proto-logic of the existential proposition – which is nothing but the internal structure of *Krisis* or scission – can form the foundation for the universal cosmogonic process. What we have reconstructed above as the ecstatic movement and the decision for crisis is not something that occurs in consciousness (or even just in transcendental consciousness), rather consciousness (as *con-scientia*, *Mitwissenschaft*) is the complicit knowledge of the crisis that occurs independently of it, and that is itself the very ground of all existence, its own existence included. As Schelling says in the section quoted above, ‘we are not dealing with a historical knowledge’ or an empirical knowledge, but rather with an entirely intelligible or noumenal knowledge of the noumenal and non-empirical genesis of reality, whereby we have not just begun to reconstruct the process of genesis but have, in doing so, already stepped into the thought of the κόσμος νοετός, the metaphysical

⁸⁸ The term reduplication (*Reduplikation*) that Schelling uses here originates in Scholastic philosophy where, as the historical forerunner to Schelling’s existential proposition, it serves mainly to explain the double divine and human nature of Christ. It is likely that Schelling picked up this theorem as a young theological seminary student in Tübingen.

universe, which Kant fails to think fully. Schelling insists that Kant's very use of the expression 'noumenon' is entirely unfitting as following Kant's own thinking, it is rather an 'anoumenon', something not conceivable or graspable by intellect. (SW X 240) Yet, to be sure, there is already in the Kantian philosophy the thought of a kind of purely noumenal cause or even conditioning of appearing reality, through the thing-in-itself, which Kant also calls the 'intelligible ground of appearances'. (AA A563, B591) However, Schelling responds, reiterating the general tenor of the post-Kantian constellation, that '...the question is posed, 1) how that intelligible ground comes to the subject, how it acts upon the latter, 2) how this material conforms so willingly to the form of understanding, 3) whence the subject derives its power over the material. These questions are not answered in the Kantian critique, and are not even posed.' (SW X 84-85) Thus the question, for Schelling, is to think this intelligible with more decisiveness and consistency, and to acknowledge that everything that is 'supposed to be understood must already carry the imprint of the intellect' [*muss das Gepräge des Verstandes tragen*] (SW X 240) whereby it is only acknowledged that (according to the doctrine of the necessary similitude of the cognising and the cognised) in order for reality to be intelligible, some kind of intelligible reality, some kind of νοῦς must be active in it, thus rendering all reality noumenal in this sense and collapsing the distinction between phenomena and noumena (all phenomena are noumena, there are no anoumenal phenomena).⁸⁹ This noumenal which renders reality intelligible is nothing but the cosmogonic process itself.

⁸⁹ It may seem as if we are treading upon familiar Hegelian territory. Does Hegel's whole critique of Kant not precisely say that Kant fails to realise that by thinking the impossibility and unthinkability of the noumenal he has already entered into the knowledge of the noumenal? The whole of the speculative logic can also be seen as an attempt to think this noumenal, as Hegel states that 'what this thing-in-itself is in truth, what truly is in itself, of this the logic is a presentation, where under the in-itself something better than abstraction is understood, namely what is in its concept.' (HW V 130) But, despite the similarity of intention (to articulate a metaphysics, and hence to think the noumenal) the solutions offered by Hegel and Schelling are radically different. Schelling agrees with Hegel that the noumenal must be thought and explicated, but Schelling agrees with Kant that there is something unthinkable in the noumenal and that the facticity of the noumenal is not exhausted by its own logicity. Hence where in Kant we are speaking epistemologically of the unthinkable for us, in Schelling we are speaking of the metaphysical reality of the unprethinkable in itself.

Schelling already has this insight in the *Timaeus Commentary*, where he argues that ‘the key to an understanding of Plato’ is that the latter ‘everywhere transposes the subjective unto the objective’. (T 31) What at first glance sounds like a Kantianisation of Plato, contains in fact the Schellingian key to the later formulation of the post-critical cosmogony, for it is precisely νοῦς, the Platonic world-soul, τοῦ παντός ψυχῇν (Tim 41d) – the power which in Platonism is the actively generative force in all, that Schelling transposes – reinterpreted as the existential position of the bond and its reduplication – everywhere into reality, calling it first *die Weltseele* in the early works of *Naturphilosophie* (following Goethe) and later simply calling it intellect or *Verstand*.⁹⁰ The νοῦς, as the very processuality of the cosmogonic

⁹⁰ Note that Schelling’s use of *Verstand* and *Vernunft* radically differs from that of Kant and Hegel. Beginning in the *Stuttgart Private Lectures* of 1810 (see VII 469 ff. – where *Vernunft* is understood as *Verstand* subordinated to soul) Schelling begins to rehabilitate the ancient meanings of νοῦς (the higher principle, an active spiritual power, the world-soul) and λόγος (the lower principle, a general order of things, or just a general order of speech) which became *intellectus* and *ratio* in the Scholastic philosophy, still maintaining the hierarchy, and was only reversed in Descartes with the degrading of *intellectus* into a merely personal faculty of reasoning, while now *ratio*, as the general scientific order of reality, becomes the higher principle. This modern taxonomy then enters the German language through Baumgärtner and becomes the relation of *Verstand* and *Vernunft* which we find in Kant and which Hegel so famously distinguishes. In attempting to reactivate νοῦς as active spiritual principle and at once confront both the devaluation of spirit in modern thought and Hegel’s conception of spirit as hypertrophic reason, from 1810 onwards Schelling begins to again reverse the relation of *Verstand* and *Vernunft* back to its ancient understanding, later often arguing that even an animal could be called reasonable (if it is not sick or mad and behaves according to its general essence) but only a superior intellect could be called truly *verstehend* (SW XIII 118 and passim, see especially also SW X 243). For Schelling, reason – as the participation in logical and essential relations – is of a lower cosmological dignity and efficacy as participation in the translogical νοῦς or spirit (which is not reason but more than reason, pace Hegel). Schelling says explicitly about the use of the word ‘understanding’ in the English language, that it only carries the meaning of the passive subject or substratum (as understanding) – whereas the German *Verstand* carries the connotation of *Vorstand* and *vorstehen* (to stand above, beyond, an active notion). (INI 122) Hence we generally translate *Verstand* with the Latin word as intellect and not as understanding, although an even more apt rendering of Schelling’s concept of *Verstand* would be ‘overstanding.’

process is hence in the post-critical cosmogony that which in the transcendental philosophy is the transcendental ideal of pure reason, a thought that does not come as a surprise, given that in the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant himself compares the transcendental ideal of pure reason – the ordering mechanism in transcendental philosophy – with Plato's divine intellect or νοῦς. (AA B596) It is now only the reinscription of the transcendental ideal of pure reason by the ontological proof of chaos which turns it into a cosmogenetic instead of a merely heuristic function. As such we are speaking of a Platonisation or cosmologisation of Kant's transcendental logic rather than a transcendentalisation of Plato.⁹¹ Along this line, we are rapidly moving towards a metaphysical rearticulation of the transcendental construction of reality regrounded on the ontological proof of chaos. As Kant's destruction of the ontological proof of God and Schelling's intensification of the critique of cosmic reason establish, both the attempt to think the genesis of the world through the categories of reason as in classical metaphysics, and the attempt to think the genesis of the categories of the world through a dialectically superior reason, as intended by Hegel, result in the cataclysmic crisis of reason. At this point, existential cosmology responds by thinking both the genesis of the world and the genesis of reason through nothing but crisis itself. The process that we are describing is the universal process. Through it, the genesis of reality occurs. In this sense, Schelling writes:

‘All which is object for us, is already in itself affected through subjectivity, i.e. in itself already partly posited as subjective... what Kant only lets happen in representation, or as he expressed himself in less generally comprehensible terms, in the transcendental synthesis of apperception, is already objective, it has already taken place independently of us.’ (X 240)

The process of unprethinkable position and reduplication captured by Schelling in the existential proposition and identified above as the proto-logical core of existential cosmology, is nothing but the process that, independently of us, posits the partial subjectivity and the partial objectivity of everything and anything, insofar as everything is grounded on the

⁹¹ What in the young Schelling is a hunch and intuition, becomes in the mature Schelling a full-fledged program, and in all the most explicit and systematic presentations of the process of generation, such as in the *Grounding of Positive Philosophy* or the *Philosophical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, the doctrine of powers is always presented as the creative rearticulation of Platonic ontology and cosmology based on the reinterpreted Kantian transcendental ideal of pure reason.

contingent unground. What we are beginning to uncover is hence the universal powers of generation, revealing what for Kant is a 'blind, but yet indispensable function of the soul' as the blind function of the world-soul – the synthesis of the decision through which each and every entity, each and every life, is generated by the primal position and the unfolding processuality of crisis. (AA B103) The *Fernere Darstellungen* of 1802 speak, in the context of an appropriation of Spinoza's concept of the absolute, of an 'absolute apperception'. (SW IV 382) The function of this universal or absolute apperception is to figure as 'mediator between the absolute and cognition' or between the infinity of the intelligible universe and the finitude of particular things. (SW IV 373) Essentially, since we are embarking on a cosmogenetic regrounding of transcendental logic, the operative core of the cosmogonic process must be sought in a transformation of the Kantian transcendental synthesis of apperception into an absolute synthesis of apperception.

The Kantian synthesis of apperception is an 'effect of the power of imagination' whereby a synthesis occurs between the contents of the empirical manifold of sensation and the forms of the understanding, generating a cognisable and objectively determinable reality against the backdrop of a dark noumenal ground: the thing-in-itself. (AA B103) The absolute synthesis of apperception is insofar not any longer relative, as it does not take place between two strands of cognition, but rather between two levels of cosmic reality, namely between the pre-worldly manifold of position by primal contingency and the forms of universal intellect or νοῦς, once again against the backdrop of a dark ground or unground which here is the unprethinkable past of the primal position itself, becoming unprethinkable or eternally past in the same instance in which it posits. In this precise sense we are not any longer speaking of an apperception in the soul but one in the world-soul, or rather the world-soul is itself nothing but the cosmogonic process in actu, generating the intelligibility of reality, and leaving only, as dark background, the unprethinkable unground behind.⁹² If the process itself is the νοῦς, then the unprethinkable unground, what for Kant is the thing-in-itself, is structurally identical

⁹² The world-soul must not be understood as some kind of para-normal, panpsychic field of communication, or even some kind of psychic agency, but strictly 'scientifically' as the universal matrix of logogenesis, the fundamental metaphysical field in which anything and everything becomes an entity, a reality, by acquiring universal parameters of intelligibility.

to the Platonic κῶρα, the receptacle out of which and against which everything determinate must constitute itself.⁹³

We have now developed the basic elements of the cosmogonic process: the X, which is in different regards both the νοῦς and the κῶρα, both the ideal of pure reason and the thing-in-itself, and we have the identity of the ideal and the real, or of subject and object, or also A = B. However, this is not yet a process, it is just a basic structure, a unique position. There needs to be a further movement, a further development, a true unfolding for the process to take off. We do not need to externally induce the movement as all the basic elements are already given, we only need to observe them more closely. Let us remind ourselves again what is given to us in the A = B. What we have in this simple first identity is the identity of, on the hand, the meontic non-being, a subjective μή ὄν and on the other hand the mere being, the merely objective, or ontic ὄν without any subjectivity. But, as we remember, previously we had

⁹³ Plato introduces the κῶρα as *the third* (το τρίτον) which stands between the noumenal archetypes and their copied images (ἐν μὲν ὡς παραδείγματος εἶδος ὑποτεθέν, νοητὸν καὶ ἀεὶ κατὰ ταῦτ' ὄν, μίμημα δὲ παραδείγματος δεύτερον, Tim 49a), or also as that which stands between being, and becoming, as the three things which are the conditions for the coming into being of the universe (ὄν τε καὶ χώραν καὶ γένεσιν εἶναι, τρία τριχῆ, καὶ πρὶν οὐρανὸν γενέσθαι, Tim 52d). The young Schelling of the *Timaeus Commentary* understands the κῶρα as the 'invisible but enduring substance' and 'substratum of all the forms that are brought forth through the creation of the world', (T 54) which is precisely how he consistently interprets the Kantian 'intelligible ground of appearances', (AA A563, B591) namely as proto-physical substratum of generation. (e.g. SW X 83) As such a cosmological substratum the κῶρα is also understood as a that which holds a kind of wild and creative proto-matter ('*Urmaterie*', T 58) containing the Empedoclesian elements (which in *Timaeus* become a vortex of elementary force-relations in the κῶρα, Tim. 48) – not yet the physical *natura naturata* but the proto-physical *natura naturans* from which determinate things spawn. This *Urmaterie* has a prominent place in Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*. A number of works, like the *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* of 1797, for which 'matter is the general seed of the universe in which all is contained that unfolds in later developments' (SW II 223) or *On the World-soul* of 1798, are devoted to its presentation as proto-physical vortex of forces, liberating nature from the Newtonianism of the first critique and reclaiming it for a dynamic and speculative – or genuinely philosophical – point of view.

determined the nature of the meontic being as that which Can Be (*Seinkönnen*). Let us hear Schelling in the *Grounding of Positive Philosophy*:

‘On this standpoint the question must be posed what can be at all. Once this question has been posed, one will right away see that the nearest in being [*das Nächste am Sein*] is that which immediately Can Be [*das unmittelbar Seinkönnende*] = that which does not require anything but to make the transition *a potentia ad actum*, in order to be, and which can itself only be pure power... we can say: the nearest in being is that which immediately Can Be through mere willing. We will hence call this the Can Be of the first order. If we denote that which can be at all by A, then the immediate Can Be can be denoted by the A to the power of one.’ (PP 350)

We have here now the A^1 , the first power in the formal process of cosmogenesis, that which can immediately be, which only lacks the actus in order to be. Schelling also says that this A^1 is the ‘essential hunger for being’ and points to the ‘meaningful Hebrew language’ in which the word for ‘can’ also means ‘to eat’. (77 INI) This hungry being without actuality is also called the negative A, the infinite lack of being, which is pure power or potency because it is immediately posited (by the X) as that which is not but can be (and not as absolute non-being or οὐκ ὄν). Hence this A is only the meontic or potential being of the B, the mere object. But since the A and the B are so far only the product of the position of contingency, only the sheer immediate being, and since neither has at this point in the development any kind of order or organisation, they are just a ‘blind, wild, and unbounded being’, once as pure object and once as pure subject. (SW X 242) Ontologically speaking, this A^1 is what in Plato is the *απειρον*, the unbounded infinity that is purely negative because it is indeterminate, in need of determination, yearning for boundedness. In the cosmology of the *Timaeus* the *απειρον* is the unordered and unmeasured state of all things (‘καὶ τὸ μὲν δὴ πρὸ τούτου πάντα ταῦτ’ εἶχεν ἀλόγως καὶ ἀμέτρως’) that prevails in the *κῶρα* until the demiurge intervenes in order to implant the first kind of ordering principles, namely forms and numbers (‘εἶδеси τε καὶ ἀριθμοῖς’, Tim 53b). Transcendentally or operatively speaking, the power of A^1 has in the absolute synthesis of apperception the same function as the synthesis of apprehension in the Kantian transcendental synthesis. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* (A-Edition) the synthesis of apprehension is the momentum in which the chaotic flux of the ‘manifold is traversed and gathered’ [*das Durchlaufen der Mannigfaltigkeit und dann die Zusammennehmung desselben*] (AA A99), which is to say that through this first synthesis the

unruly and unordered manifold enters into the formal process without yet being reduced to unity. We have here the pure formal entry of the manifold and thus the first synthesis is also called the 'synthesis of the manifold' (AA A100). What the first power, the A^1 thus gives us is the subjective form of the chaotic manifold B, the form of all that Can Be immediately, without further restrictions. In the A^1 everything that can immediately be, is given without exclusion or opposition. We must remember that the process of cosmogenesis is always also one of logogenesis and that the proto-logical forms emerge here together with the basic ontological forms, they are not necessary but themselves emergent out of the process in which universal order is generated. Accordingly 'the so called laws of thought are only valid under the condition of a highest cause, which has ordered them: logic itself is just a positive science'. (PP 296) Among the classical laws of thought (treated in detail above in the chapter on Hegel) besides the principle of sufficient reason (the principle of the ground, *der Satz vom Grunde*) that was posited with the factitious decision of the X (and was hence itself ungrounded) – we have here only so far the principle of identity, given in the speculative identity of $A = B$ (the 1st law of thought). What it is that the A as infinite potential manifold can be is nothing but the B, or the mere objective being. Every Can Be can become that which is, every A can become a B, but since there is no further principle to determine this being, the Can Be can also be A again, or what is B can become A.

'All that Can Be [*alles Seinkönnen*] in the transitive sense, to use the earlier applied expression again here, stands between a double being, that, from which it comes and that towards which it goes, hence it is by nature double-meaning [*doppelsinnig*] (*natura anceps*); twoness (Dyas) in the Pythagorean and Platonic sense, which is by itself the indeterminate, ἡ ἀόριστος δυάς as it has also been called. And when the boundedlessness of the first principle is related to the being out of bounds of the latter, thus we will relate the name of twoness [*Zweiheit*] to its nature, namely since it is A, but that can only be its opposite (B), but once become this opposite B, it can once again be A, such that it never leaves the twoness, and Plato rightfully says about it, that it never actually is but only ever becomes.' (SW XI 396)

As the first power, the A^1 is this indetermination 'hovering between being and non-being', between contraction and expansion, in all finite things, all things that are not yet eternally decided, all becoming things. It is the beating heart – the systole and diastole, Schelling often

says – of becoming nature, to be suspended between being and non-being.⁹⁴ (PP 124) Hence the ‘being of the creature is vibration, oscillation; the creature is that which always changes, as if moved by the silent odem, enclosed by two causes, from which that dualism of forces stem.’ (P 319) But the dualism is not the end of the process. Already in the *Naturphilosophie*, the oscillation between expansion and contraction gives rise to the emergence of a new pattern, a higher order of organisation, a higher potency. There is something in the oscillation and the indecision of twoness (by which the Pythagorean ἡ ἀόριστος δυάς is meant – the indefinite dyad, unknowable and disorderly) which already strives beyond the first order of the immediate Can Be and towards a higher order or a higher power. In the *Grounding of Positive Philosophy* Schelling continues his explanation thus:

‘But now we have not said that this A of the first series [*der ersten Folge*] was exclusively that which immediately Can Be. So this still leaves behind or beyond it another to be thought as one that is *not* what Can Be *immediately*, for which we have no other concept for now as that it is what Can Not Be, which in turn does not prevent this 2nd to be what Can Be mediate, and what counts is only to make this concept of that which mediate Can Be clear to us. Since according to our supposition it is a 2nd, it can not be the first immediately Can Be, but if it is, it can only be posited objectively, entirely without subject [*subjektlos*]; that first will be the subject for it; it itself will behave as a pure object, a pure being. As long as the first remains *potentia pura*, it also prevents the 2nd from being power too. If however the first becomes object, if it

⁹⁴ This is the central idea of Schelling’s early *Naturphilosophie*. Setting out from Kant’s dynamic construction of matter in the *Metaphysical Grounds of Natural Science* of 1786 – where Kant conceives of matter as transcendently constituted by two antagonistic forces, an attractive and a repulsive force, which is in turn Kant’s late attempt to finally reconcile the Leibnizian theory of dynamic matter with the Newtonian mechanical laws, a project initiated already in Kant’s first writing, the *True Estimation of Living Forces* of 1747. Schelling’s speculative physics seeks to construct the dynamic process in the whole of nature, and the entire ‘metamorphosis of the universe’ through the forces of expansion and contraction. (SW III 124) In this general vision, which always remains Schelling’s view of nature, all natural phenomena are temporary and transient manifestations of an antagonistic process which progressively evolves through levels and orders of natural reality to produce the variety of cosmic forms, from space and time to the ideas as fundamental ordering principles of spatiotemporal manifestation.

becomes B out of A, then the 2nd must also acquire a subjectivity in itself through this necessary relation between the 1st and the 2nd. The first is the self to the 2nd, but precisely due to this necessary relation, if the first wants to be itself object, and be B too, necessarily this 2nd itself must also become subject or it will acquire a power in itself. But now it does not cease to be the pure, selfless Being [*Seiende*] according to its nature. This potentiality is hence against its nature and hence intolerable to it; this is exactly why the 2nd will have to act according to its nature, in order to get rid of the potentiality again, in order to posit that which should not be Being again as the non-Being [*das Nichtseiende*] and thus rather generate in itself the pure selfless being, to enact itself again as pure Being. Hence this 2nd is only that which can actualise itself of the 2nd order, hence A to the power of two. It is not by itself potentiality, it requires another by which it is posited as that which Must Be [*das Seinmüssen*], because the mere Must Be is also a non-Being, as such it behaves in this process. The 2nd is hence that which can only mediately *actu* actualise itself.' (PP 350-351)

We will attempt to clarify further the transition described in this dense passage. In the oscillation between A and B there is no decision between either A or B, the A^1 is essentially this openness and indecision. But yet there is something objectively stable in the relation or in the oscillation and that is precisely that it is a relation between A and B. This stability, or this stable nature of the essential relation between A and B, is posited itself as an object, an object to which the A^1 is the subject (since there is no object without a subject, no *Gegenstand* without an *Urstand* or substratum that carries it). The new object is now no longer an immediate Can Be, since it is only through the mediation of the relation between A and B, but it is a mediated Can Be or a Can Be that depends on another. But now the A^1 is still in indecision and oscillates back into the B whereby the new Can Be of the higher order loses its subject, its carrier or ὑποκειμένων. Now it would either have to become a subject itself such that the B can be or it remains an object posited by the A^1 , but it can not be both at once and in the same relation or in the same regard. Thus in reaction to the threatening oscillation, it must act on the A^1 and enforce the decision between A and B, posit that which should be and excise that which should not be. As such this second power, the A^2 is the power which demands the principle of contradiction and enforces the decision to take place between A and B (the 2nd law of thought). This power can also be called a 'not-not-can-be' (*ein Nicht-nicht-sein-können*) or expressed shorter and more succinctly: the Must Be. (INI 79) Schelling also calls it the *principium exclusi secundi* since it is the Must Be as exclusion of the second option

through which the Can Be leaves the state of infinite potentiality and passes into determinate being. Ontologically this A^2 is what in the Platonic (and Pythagorean) ontology is the *πέρας*, the boundary and the limitation that must act on the boundedlessness of the *απειρον* so that a determinate reality can emerge, and so that the *ἄοριστος* *δυάς* can become a *μονάς*, the unbounded twoness can become a one, a determinate and bounded entity with measure and proportion.⁹⁵ Transcendentally or operatively, the A^2 corresponds to the Kantian synthesis of

⁹⁵ In the *Philebos*, where Plato discusses the theory of the *απειρον* and *περας* in the context of the search for the good and its distinction from pleasure, the concepts of the unlimited and its limitation are described as a kind of Promethean gift to the mortals, where the Promethean figure clearly is none other than Pythagoras from whom the theory of *απειρον* and *περας* derives together with the insight into the elementary metaphysical function of numeric proportions. (*Phi.* 16c) Plato's appropriation of this general theory proceeds by way of the *Parmenides* where the injection of the ontology of *απειρον* and *περας* into the Parmenidian problematic of the One (particularly in the first, third and seventh hypotheses, *Par.*, 137c-138b, 158b-158d, 165a-165e) pushes the doctrine beyond the unmediated oppositions of Pythagoreanism (according to which the infinite and the finite stand in a simple relation of bad and good, extending to all kinds of other dualities like light and dark, male and female, and so on) and is developed into a properly dialectical ontology, which in turn is the basis for the distinctive mature Platonic ontology that underlies, implicitly or explicitly, all the late dialogues but is especially prominent in *Sophistes*, *Philebos*, *Politikos* and *Nomoi*. Schelling is already aware of the significance of this ontology when he first begins to formulate his post-Kantian Platonism in the *Timaeus Commentary* of 1794, where after the interpretation of the *κῶρα* as proto-matter, Schelling turns immediately to an extensive discussion of the ontology of *απειρον* and *περας* in the *Philebos*, arguing that although it is not explicitly mentioned in the *Timaeus*, the Pythagorean background is indispensable for an understanding of the Platonic philosophy in general. (T 63) In the *Timaeus Commentary* Schelling already understands the Platonic *γένε* as '*Weltbegriffe*' or cosmic concepts, which, in conjunction with one of Schelling's other first writings – *On the Possibility of a Form of Philosophy* of 1794 where Schelling seeks to reduce the twelve categories of the Kantian table of categories to three root categories that contain all the others – we can already see as the genesis of Schelling's general program of the doctrine of powers as metaphysics of world-construction. In later statements of the doctrine of powers such as the important 17th lecture of the *Philosophical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* and the 3rd lecture to the

reproduction, the function in which the previously unruly and unbounded manifold of sensation is submitted to a constant or 'stable rule' such that 'in the manifold of representation an accompaniment or consequence following certain rules takes place' producing rule-conforming behaviour and making it possible to reproduce sections of the manifold with predictable regularity. (AA A100) This ordering function prevents that, according to the famous passage 'cinnabar was at times red, at times black, at times light, at times heavy, a human transformed sometimes into this and sometimes into that animal form, and on the longest day the land was once covered with fruits and once with ice and snow' such that no consistent and recognisable reality could take shape at all. (AA A100-101) Evidently, in this passage from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant is retelling the tale of the Empedoclesian *Urzeit* in which there were heads without necks, shoulders without arms, animal bodies with human heads and figures of double or no sex and in which generally all was in a great unordered and meaningless confusion. But like Plato, Kant too posits the necessity of an ordering and limiting principle. This principle is the second synthesis, immanently at work in the reproducing imagination through which this ordering function, also called the synthesis of imagination, renders a consistent experience possible.⁹⁶ In the cosmogonic process, the A^2 of the Must Be is this ordering function that limits and produces regularity. It can also be called the positive A, since opposed to the negative A of the sheer Can Be, it is a power of determination and distinction. But the power of distinction is not yet the distinction itself. A third power is needed, and Schelling continues in the *Grounding of Positive Philosophy*:

Grounding of Positive Philosophy Schelling always returns at the most crucial junctions to a discussion of the *Philebos* and the Platonic ontology in the context of Kant's ideal of pure reason, corroborating our thesis beyond doubt. (SW XI 393 ff., SW X 253 ff.)

⁹⁶ For Empedocles, the primal time of chaos is overcome through the combination of elements whereby in a blind and absolutely random process – which can be seen as a proto-Darwinian forerunner to natural selection or as a kind of aleatory materialism – the working combinations are kept and the useless ones are discarded. On the line of thought Plato-Kant-Schelling however, the constitutive contingency of matter is only half of the story, with the other half being the necessity of ideal form. While the materialist thinks only the former, the idealist thinks only the latter. The whole problem of philosophy however is to think the paradoxical conjunction of both.

‘Apart from these two, the immediately and the merely mediately Can Be, only a 3rd Can Be can be thought, the Shall Be [*das Seinsollende*]. Because the mere Shall Be is also not an actual being yet, but merely a Can Be. The Shall Be is a Can Be, which has another before it that must be overcome by a mediator; it hence presupposes twofold: that in front of which it can not be and the power which overcomes the latter. The Shall Be is posited through the 1st which is brought to expiration by the 2nd, hence the Shall Be can only be A to the power of three.’ (PP 351)

In the action of the Must Be, the indeterminacy and the freedom of the Can Be is curtailed and the possibilities of reality that shall not be are excluded. But the Must Be is itself not free, it is always what it is, rigid, stern and strict. In the Must Be all original freedom is lost. But the freedom of the primal decision, the drive and energy of the whole cosmogonic process, is still implicit in the subjectness of the Can Be and it strives beyond its own curtailment by the Must Be. It cannot overcome the Must Be which is like an iron necessity for it, but it accepts its fate and lets go of that in itself which is now prohibited, its freedom, and lets this freedom that has been left to go, posit a higher unity between itself, the Can Be, and the Must Be. If the Can Be bows down to the dictum of the Must Be and forsakes itself entirely, if it enslaves itself entirely, then the process would come to an end as the cosmogonic process is only a process of freedom. But if the Can Be accepts and acknowledges the Must Be and the necessities of the world, but yet does not cease to seek its freedom, and does so now in a different manner, in a manner not directly and immediately opposed to the Must Be, but beyond the Must Be, then that which seemed previously impossible will be posited. The *exclusum tertium*, the principle of the excluded third (3rd law of thought) will be posited, as the principle of the Shall Be, of the new and higher possibility of freedom beyond the clash of Can Be and Must Be. This new possibility, this higher reconciliation of the previous two powers in the new power A³, must be thought as a more sovereign and mature freedom than the immediate and wild freedom to be anything or nothing of the A¹. It must be thought as a freedom reigned in by the A², but hence strengthened and matured. This sovereign freedom is also ‘the freedom to give itself while not giving itself up’, a freedom which ‘in giving itself can also be that which takes’, it is the higher concept of ‘spontaneity’. (INI 79)

The Shall Be is that for the sake of which the whole process is, it is the purpose of the process that retrospectively justifies the preceding momenta and reveals their higher meaning. It is that which, among all the powers, is the closest to the ὄντως ὄν that is willed and wanted

by philosophy (but is not the ὄντως ὄν yet). In the cosmogonic process, the Shall Be has the ontological meaning of what in the Platonic ontology is the κοινόν, the higher product of the ἄπειρον and the πέρας, the product in which, despite now being limited and controlled by the second instance, there is still the unruly force and energy of the unlimited, in *Philebos* this third also appears as the γεγεννημένην, the generated or the product of all generation. (*Phi.* 27b) As we have seen already in the previous powers, to each ontological correspondence there is a functional correspondence in Kant's transcendental apparatus. In the case of the A^3 there is also the correspondence to the third synthesis, the synthesis of recognition, which clarifies what has been going on in the synthesis of the manifold and the synthesis of its reproduction by recognising the transcendental condition of the whole process of object-construction in the stability of conceptual determination which is only guaranteed by the regularity of 'a pure, original, immutable consciousness' that Kant calls 'transcendental apperception' and the pure form of a transcendental object = x, whereby that which is in the actual purpose of the synthetic process is finally revealed and retrospectively read into the two preceding synthesis.⁹⁷ (AA A107) Together, the three powers of the A^1 , A^2 and A^3 , the Can Be, the Must Be and the Shall Be are the 'principles or ἀρχα, the investigation of which has been viewed since the most ancient times as the main task of philosophy' and in view of these three *Weltbegriffe*, arche-powers and arche-concepts, that can also be called '1. the unlimited, undetermined, 2. The limiting, determining, 3. The substance that grasps itself and determines

⁹⁷ This pure form of transcendental consciousness must itself be facing the pure form of a conceptual object (in absence of a particular concept determining a particular object – since it is only a question of general form here) which Kant labels the transcendental object = x. Although only a derivative element in the process of transcendental construction that actually takes places in the syntheses as produced in the section on the *Deduction of the Concepts of Understanding*, from an architectonic view, with regards to the economy of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, this latter necessity of the object = x is the real purpose of the deduction, since it proves the necessary capacity of the transcendental subject to determine the empirical manifold through its logical or conceptual apparatus and thus precisely proves the transcendental validity of the categories. While the B-Deduction better succeeds in proving this capacity – by emphasising stronger the self-grounding circularity of the relation between transcendental object and transcendental subject – a significant and singular insight into the psycho-ontological functionality and the levels or layers of reality-construction, granted by the A-Deduction, is lost in the B-Edition. No doubt, this is why prominent readers of Kant like Heidegger or Deleuze work so productively with the A-Deduction.

itself, as which only the spirit presents itself', the whole of philosophy is 'nothing but the ἐπιστήμη τῶν ἀρχῶν'. (SW XI 113)

These are the powers that compose each and every entity, since 'every thing is the common work of the three powers, hence it is a concrete, as it were, concreated out of many.' (SW XII 117) In Plato, the fundamental ontological concepts are at the very basis of cosmology and cosmogony as their operation is the condition for the whole of the world ('ὅλον') to step out of the unmeasured and the unordered chaotic state ('ἀλόγου') and become an ordered universe ('κόσμου') (*Phi.* 28d) Schelling is unmistakably clear about how the three powers are a post-critical reanimation of the ancient Platonic-Pythagorean ontology, about them, Schelling says 'it is indeed remarkable, how out of the deepest roots of the modern philosophy, this result, entirely accordant with the oldest and most revered, emerges, and how the latter comes to live again in modern times.' (SW X 253) Thus, like the Platonic γέννη, the three powers of post-critical cosmogony, rearticulated as the operative functions of a generative process grounded on nothing but crisis, are 'necessary and indispensable' for all thought that seeks to go beyond the immediate, and for the thought of all 'generation of being', as well as for 'all possible process'. (SW XI 395) As such, the three cosmogenetic powers are the reality-conditions (and not just the conditions of cognition) of the genesis of all reality. Insofar as the ontological proof of chaos inscribes the actual cosmogonic process into what for Kant is the transcendental ideal of pure reason, the powers, as the primal forces of the cosmogonic process, do precisely what the ideal of reason does in the transcendental philosophy: they provide the real material, now not any longer of all possible experience as in Kant, but of all actual reality. We can schematise the relation of the cosmogonic powers to the Platonic-Pythagorean ontology and to the Kantian transcendental apparatus as such:

| Plato | Kant | Schelling |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| κῶρα (the Receptacle) | Thing-in-Itself | The Unprethinkable (as Chaos) |
| ἄπειρον (the Unlimited) | Synthesis of Apprehension | A ¹ – the Can Be |
| πέρας (the Limit) | Synthesis of Reproduction | A ² – the Must Be |
| κοινὸν (the Communion) | Synthesis of Recognition | A ³ – the Shall Be |
| αἴτια (the Principle) | Ideal of Pure Reason | The Unprethinkable (as Cosmos) |

About the powers, Schelling says: 'It is not difficult to recognise in those 3 powers [*Potenzen*] the true primal forces [*Urmächte*] of all being, the true primal categories [*Urkategorien*] and

highest concepts of all being.' (PP 350) And, identifying the powers not only as cosmogenetic but as equally logogenetic, Schelling continues:

'In these 3 concepts of the Can Be, the Must Be, and the Shall Be, all the categories of being are contained, all priorities, all primal concepts [*Urbegriffe*]; in these 3 concepts the type of all reason is contained [*der Typus aller Vernunft*] and the entire logic. With these three concepts all intellect begins, with them the chaos shapes itself into Janus [*mit ihnen gestaltet sich das Chaos zum Janus*].'⁹⁸ (PP 352)

But if that is the case, and the powers are primal categories and highest concepts, then have we not just merely replicated a highly concentrated minimal version of Hegel's speculative logic? To be sure there are similarities between Schelling's powers and Hegel's logic. As in the Hegelian logic, the powers proceed from the immediate (the Can Be) over the mediation (the Must Be) to the mediation of the mediation (the Shall Be) and as such can also be understood as three orders of reflexion. However, the crucial and decisive difference is this: in Hegel the highest order of reflexion, that is, the most highly reflected concept of the absolute idea, carries in itself again the immediacy of the reflexionless being and thus ties the end of the *Logic* back into its beginning like the Orouboros, the mythical snake that eats its own tail and perpetually keeps circling and eating, thus grounding the movement of the concept in the stability of its own circulation and hence providing for the self-sufficiency of the speculative logic which, strictly speaking, does not need anything outside itself, neither nature nor history. In Schelling's doctrine of powers on the other hand, the logicity of the powers does not exhaust their facticity, that is to say that the powers are 'primal categories' and 'primal concepts' but only insofar as they actually exist, and *that* they exist is not guaranteed by their own logicity but only by the fact of the unprethinkable decision. In the *Philosophy of Mythology*, Schelling develops this crucial difference to Hegel, somewhat polemically, after having noted that the difficulty in understanding the powers for many resides in that they are

⁹⁸ Janus is the Roman two-headed god, who has no equivalent in the Greek pantheon, but who is seen as the personification of what in the Greek mythology is the pure concept of the chaos. However, Schelling's interpretation, given in the 26th lecture of the *Philosophy of Mythology*, is that Janus is the opened or disclosed chaos, that is, no longer the eternal and self-enclosed chaos before all time but the chaos that has opened itself up unto the world, and that has posited the real opposition or the real antagonism (which is merely potential in chaos), and hence appears with two heads looking into opposite directions. (SW XII 598)

not something 'concrete and palpable' like a 'singular body, a singular plant, etc.' but rather something intelligible to be 'captured and grasped by the pure intellect', but with regards to these intelligibles, he states:

'Apart from the sensuous and palpable some find nothing inside themselves but abstract concepts, which certainly have no existence outside of us, concepts like: being-there [*Daseyn*], becoming, quantity, quality, substantiality, causality, etc., yes, a recent philosophy even believed to be able to ground all of philosophy on a system of these abstract concept... This artistic feat [*dieses Kunststück*]... failed and miserably shipwrecked, as soon as this philosophy had to proceed to actual existence, and first to nature. The powers of which we speak are neither something palpable, nor are they mere abstractions (abstract concepts); they are real, acting, and thus actual forces [*wirkliche Mächte*], they stand between the concrete and the merely abstract concepts insofar in the middle, as they are not less than these, but only in a higher sense, true *universalia*, that are yet at once actualities, not inactualities [*Umwirklichkeiten*] like abstract concepts.' (SW XII 114-115)

The difference between the Schellingian powers and the Hegelian concepts is that the former are abstract existences whereas the latter are non-existent abstractions. Here, Schelling has touched on the very core of metaphysical empiricism, namely that it searches in the currents of the universal life process for the being of the ideas as abstract existences, for the being of universals as real occurrences, and for the being of powers as real generalities or real abstractions. Hence, Schelling continues:

'But just this region of the true, i.e. real *universalia* is inaccessible to many. Crass empiricists speak as if in nature there was nothing but the concrete and the palpable, they do not see that for instance gravity, light, echo, heat, electricity, magnetism, that these are no palpable things, but true *universalia*, even less they notice that it is exactly only these universal powers of nature that are valuable for science... Our powers that are only to be grasped by the intellect and are hence in this sense purely intelligible, relate to these *universalia* in nature (gravity, light), like the *universalissima*...' (SW XII 116)

Thus the Schellingian powers are not thoughts in the mind of God before the creation of the world, but existing forces in the creative cosmic process, forces like heat or gravity, only of a higher metaphysical generality or a higher (in fact the highest possible) level of real abstraction.⁹⁹ Incapable of accounting for their own facticity through circular logical movement, the powers hence have to be encountered instead of deduced. In fact, thought is always already confronted with the reality of the powers, it only has to raise itself to the highest intellectual intuition or insight, the vision of the purely intelligible ether of potentiality

⁹⁹ There is no substantial Hegelian critique of the doctrine of powers, which is understandable since firstly Hegel died before Schelling had begun to present his mature critique of the Hegelian logic, and secondly Schelling never published any of the advanced developments of the doctrine of powers in his lifetime (they, like all the other lecture courses, were posthumously published by his son). Hence Hegel could only know the much more simple doctrine of powers of the early writings such as *Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie* of 1800 where the powers have not yet gone through the complex development of Schelling's philosophy of existence, and have a restricted function as describing only the differentiation of the finite from the infinite, as 'every determinate power denotes a determinate quantitative difference of subjectivity and objectivity which takes place in relation to the whole or totality', (§ 42 *Darstellung*, SW IV 134) which is how Hegel himself uses the concept of the *Potenzen* abundantly in his own Schellingianising phase, such as in the *System der Sittlichkeit* of 1803, until he then develops his distinctive concept of the concept (in the *Jenenser Logik* of 1804/1805) and drops the Schellingian concept of power. In the *Science of Logic* Hegel says thus: 'It is like in the childhood of philosophy, that, like by Pythagoras, numbers – and first, second, power etc. are in no way superior to numbers – are used for the denoting of universal, essential differences. This was a pre-level of the pure grasping by thought; after Pythagoras the determinations of thought have been invented, i.e. have been brought to consciousness *for itself*. But to return from these back to the numeral determinations belongs to a thought that feels itself incapable [*einem sich unvermögend fühlenden Denken*], which now adds the ridiculousness of wanting to make that weakness... count as something noble and as a progress.' (HW V 386) While Schelling responds simply that Hegel too has three levels and three orders everywhere and that it is irrelevant whether he admits that they are three or not, (SW X 145) Hegel's critique of the thought that feels itself incapable (in front of sheer existence or the unprethinkable) is more perspicacious than Hegel could know at the time (not just with regards to Schelling but generally with regards to post-idealist philosophy).

or rather of virtuality that is the very own being of thought as pure power, the *Ekstasis* and complicit knowledge of creation, which is nothing but a vision of that which Can Be, which Must Be and which Shall Be. But to say that there is no circular generation of self-sufficiency among these powers does not mean that they are static or even that there is no further mediation and development among them and evidently we need this further development, for even now, despite having reconstructed the three powers as three orders of reality, we only have a linear succession from the crisis through three categories, and not the ongoing cosmogonic process that we seek as the foundation of existential cosmology.

Let us retrace the preceding development in order to find the principle of movement. In the *Philebos*, Plato must take a further and fourth category to be the ground and the activity of the ontology of the unlimited and its limitation as a whole, namely the principle (αἴτια) which is in fact nothing but the world-soul (νοῦς). (see *Phi.* 23c-23d, 27b-27c) Similarly, in the Kantian transcendental apparatus the three syntheses are the basic elements of the process of phenomenal generation, but without the ideal of pure reason as sorting mechanism, the actual process could not be activated. In the Schellingian cosmogonic process we thus also have the unprethinkable decision as activator and energiser of the whole process, as without the primal position of the absolute subject, we called it X above – in the context of the doctrine of powers Schelling generally calls it A^0 (that which is *das Potenzlose*, before and beyond all power) – the cosmogonic process would not be initiated. We set out from this unprethinkable decision in which the absolute subject posits itself and in the same movement posits a merely objective ὄν without any subjectness and a μὴ ὄν that seeks to know itself and its own freedom, but cannot, since it is itself only a relative subject in relation to the pure object that it grounds. Above, we have developed the proto-logical structure of this triplicity as that of reduplication and existential proposition, enacted in the crisis. Schelling also says in more metaphoric language, taking the eternal freedom as absolute will (since sheer possibility to be or not to be) that with the position of the absolute will, a ‘lust to take on being’ as well as a ‘lust to leave it and the will to know itself’ emerge at once, such that ‘these three wills are only one act’. (INI 107) Thus what originally energises and activates both the cosmogonic process and the process of philosophy, as that non-knowing knowledge which wills and wants the ὄντως ὄν, the emphatic being of all, or the being of all as freedom, is the primal position and the drive of the absolute freedom to know itself and to have itself. Articulating this drive, the original principle of movement, more emphatically as the primal universal force, Schelling says:

‘This is the eternal freedom, that always seeks and demands freedom and wants to lead everything into freedom. Because the highest law of all life is: there shall be freedom; and this is the highest law of the universe: there shall be nothing else than eternal freedom. Each shall be what it is, with freedom. What is something, shall not be it blindly, but with its will; and even the nothing shall not be this blindly, but because it forsakes the being.’ (INI 106)

So this striving for absolute freedom, the leading of the blindly-existing into its most lucid self-knowing and self-affirmation, is ‘the highest law of the universe’, that through which the whole process is. In our reconstruction of the process we then saw how, in the further unfolding of the drive, the Must Be forces the A^1 to end its indecision between itself and the B of the pure object that the A^1 can be, such that the A^1 would decide against the B and would excise and exclude the B from its own potentiality. If this was the case, then the Shall Be, as a Can Be to the power of three (like the Must Be is just a Can Be to the power of two) would now be the potentiation of a pure subject, a pure A without any B. But if there was this pure subject, it would be absolute and in this case the primal subject of the A^0 would be able to know itself and have itself whereby the process would come to an end as the self-recognition of absolute freedom. If this was the way the process actually played out, then there would be no objectivity, no B, anywhere, there would just be the integral, eternal, freedom of a primal contingency. This is a perfectly possible outcome insofar as the existence of everything and of the universe itself is contingent. This world did not have to be. There did not have to be a world at all. The A would in this case succeed to know and to be the absolute subject that posited it, it would be $A = A$ as expression of the ultimate freedom. Regarding this scenario in which the absolute subject has stayed in the inwardness of the A and has not posited a B, Schelling says:

‘Now, the question is whether this unity has become real or not. It is evident that it has not. Of this the view of reality, of life, of time and of our own searching for knowledge convinces us. Because if the Can Be would stay in the inwardness, then the mobile would be bound up with it and there would be no ambiguity; because mobility and ambiguity are basically one and the same. The Can Be is the mobile, the mobility itself. In the other powers there is no original mobility, already because they are determined through the first, the Can Be, that alone can determine itself. If thus the Can Be did stay

in the internality, there would be no time. Then time would be something (merely) hidden, internal; the eternity instead would be the external, the manifest; while now inversely eternity is the hidden, internal, ideal, and time is the manifest, external. In the great moment of decision thus time and eternity themselves stood on the balance, because it was the question which is the internal and which the external. It depended on the Can Be whether time should stay the internal, hidden, and eternity the external ,manifest, or the other way around. The Can Be, such that it is the suppositum of all, is also the joint of time and eternity [*Angel der Zeit u. Ewigkeit*].’ (INI 115)

The fact that there is time, there is a world, there is everywhere around us in the world of human affairs unfreedom and reification of all human relations, proves that the B, the merely and purely objective without subjectness, has been posited everywhere and in everything, and that the ‘great decision’ of the Can Be, the decision on time and eternity, has been made for the externality of time and the internality of eternity. While the Shall Be arises as the injunction of the Must Be to force the Can Be to oust and renounce its potentiality to be B, to be mere objectness, and become pure subject, the indecision of the Can Be and the continuous and perpetual position of the B deranges and disturbs the entire process and incessantly posits that which Shall Not Be, namely unfreedom. This actual position and constant re-position of the B (for which there was no logical necessity, which is an entirely contingent fact) is at once the position of time, of the extra-logical reality of time. Now we are able to grasp the meaning of Schelling’s notorious *Weltformel*, the world-formula, the proto-logical complexus of the universe, the formula which, in the third draft of the *Ages of the World* Schelling calls ‘the One and All (ἓν καὶ πᾶν) in innermost interconnection’, (SW VIII 312) that which the being of the cosmos in immanent identity to the chaos is as such:¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ We should not that Schelling does not actually use the term ‘*Weltformel*’, it is a term introduced by Schelling scholarship, with an implicit reference to the hybris of the Faustian quest for the *Weltgeheimnis* (the world-secret). With slight variations, the formula can be encountered a number of times in Schelling’s writings, such as in the quoted passage from the *Ages of the World*, or also in the *Stuttgart Private Lectures* where Schelling produces a genetic construction of the formula out of the proto-logical theorem of redoublication. (SW VII 425 ff.) Interpreters of Schelling have been perplexed by the meaning of this formula for decades, and many have ignored it or written it off as a flight of fancy or half-serious play. Wolfram Högbe is to be credited with having given a consistent and influential interpretation of the formula in his *Genesis und Prädikation*. (Högbe 1999) While

$$\left(\frac{A^3}{A^2 = (A = B)} \right) B$$

It may be hard to comprehend at first how this symbolism is supposed to present the very core of all reality and had we begun our study by its presentation it would have certainly been a task doomed to failure. But now, through the preceding development we have gained all the necessary means to explicate stringently and exactly the sense of this philosopheme.¹⁰¹ The core of the formula, the $A = B$ is that the Can Be stands in an ambiguous relation to what is, on which in turn the Must Be as the A^2 enforces the decision through its own equation to the $A = B$. Now, the A^3 emerges from the enforcement of the decision by the Must Be, as that which is the higher unity of the Must Be and the Can Be. But now, since the B was not purged in the equation of the Can Be to being, or since the decision was not made only and solely for the A and against the B, but rather the decision remains ambiguous, it can just as well be made for the B, now the B stands outside of the whole relation and threatens its consistency. The B outside the parentheses is the indivisible remainder that escapes the logicity of the powers and threatens a collapse of the whole relation, whereby the B outside the parantheses, the remaining B, equates to the whole formula, or to the internal system of A^1 , A^2 , A^3 , as a new $A = B$, whereby the process begins anew and a rotary movement sets in. Thus we have in fact a circulatory movement in which the A of the highest order runs back into the A of the

Hogrebe's interpretation is important in that it understands the formula as encapsulating the core of Schellingian metaphysics, in our view his focus on metaphysics as 'fundamental heuristics of predication' hinders him from reaching the full truth of the formula (and of Schelling's metaphysics), missing out on its crucial cosmo-political, historical and eschatological dimensions. The interpretation that we give here attempts to grasp the full cosmological significance of the formula.

¹⁰¹ On a further note it should be clarified that Schelling's use of mathematical symbolism is not strictu sensu mathematical. Rather it is an invented or pseudo-mathematical formalism (like already used by Fichte) to denote abstract formal relations with more efficiency and with what in German is called *Anschaulichkeit* (something like 'intuitability'). The use of invented or modified formalisms is not unknown among modern thinkers, it can be encountered for example in the already mentioned *Laws of Form* of Spencer-Brown, (Spencer-Brown 1994) or also in the mathemes often used in the *Écrits* of Jacques Lacan, whose relation to formalisation is similar to that of Schelling.

lowest order, not unlike the perpetual circulations of the Hegelian *Logic* (after all, Schelling and Hegel are not only rivals but also fundamentally kindred spirits) – however, we have here the crucial and all-decisive difference that, although constitutive element of the rotary movement, an ungraspable and alien element remains outside of the circulation and at all times threatens its imminent collapse. The circulation is not self-sufficiently grounded on itself but precisely on the crisis, on the unground, it is precisely grounded on the incessant failure to exhaustively grasp reality and the decidedness of its own facticity. Expressing the above interpretation in a verbal proposition, we can articulate the core of the Schellingian doctrine of powers, and what we suggest as the true meaning of the world-formula, as that what holds the world together in its innermost being, as such:

It Shall Be that what Must Be is what Can Be. Or Shall it Not?

The Shall Be is the actualisation of the ὄντως ὄν, the realisation of the highest law of being which wants that all that is, becomes pure freedom, partakes in absolute freedom or is what it is only through freedom and only through itself. For this to occur the discrepancy between what Can Be and what Must Be, between the potentials, desires and yearnings of the not-yet and the iron necessity of the already, must vanish. Only when the discrepancies vanish will the process reach its fulfilment (since it will be $A = A$, the absolute freedom will know and have itself) and the powers themselves will vanish. Only then, when the powers are ‘devoured in the progression’, the non-actuality of the powers can give rise to that which absolutely transcends all powers – the ὄντως ὄν, only then, when the universe and everything in it has become absolute freedom, God would truly be. (INI 110) Until then, for as long as the world-process is, God is not yet and absolute freedom can never be known or had. For as long as the universe becomes, the absolute freedom is only intimated as the unprethinkable past of the position, the blind *Urzufall* that posited all but that was not yet God. The absolute freedom remains that which is always wanted but never achieved in the obsessively compulsive rotary movement, setting out again and again through A^1 , A^2 and to A^3 , again and again threatened and disturbed by the B. To transcend this process and reach the integral unity of the $A = A$ so that God can truly be and all existence can be redeemed, is the purpose which is the life and the energy of the cosmogonic process. In this sense Schelling also calls the powers the ‘highest causes’, where the A and the B or the dichotomy of $A = B$ is the *causa materialis* as that on the ground of which there is the process and the emergence of time, the A^2 is the *causa efficiens* or that through which everything becomes what it is within the process, and

the A³ as the *causa finalis* for the sake of which everything is. (SW XII 112, and PP 287) But that the universal process is perpetually endangered by the resurgence of the B, and the factual unwillingness or incapacity of the A to oust the B from itself, is exactly what poses a question to the entire process. Or Shall it Not be? All depends on this question. All depends on freedom and in the final instance on the Can Be and the decision of the Can Be.

‘This Can Be is the underlying [*die Unterlage*], the root of this whole being. It is, without knowing it, the grounding, the subject of this whole consistence of the eternal freedom. The Can Be is in this non-knowing all, because it is the subject of all. All depends on it. If the Can Be would step out of this potentiality, the Must Be and the Shall Be would have to step out too. But this is exactly the root of the whole and the main intention of the law. Why is this the main intention of the law? Because this being of the absolute or of the eternal freedom is an entirely contingent.’ (INI 110)

The being of the absolute freedom itself is not guaranteed by a higher metaphysical necessity, no ontological proof of God, no principle of sufficient reason, that could guarantee the becoming actual of the highest purpose of the universe. In positing the universe as a contingent emergence, the absolute freedom has, so to speak made itself dependent on the decisions of its creation, God has made his very (futural and possible) existence dependent on the unfolding of history. Therefore, the Can Be, without knowing it, ‘holds all in check’ and ‘nothing can reach a decided being, as long as the Can Be is not decided’. (INI 111) But decision there must be, because the highest law of being demands only this that ‘nothing remain hidden, everything become manifest, everything clear and decided’ and this is precisely the imperative of the ‘highest law of the world, hovering above all [*das höchste über allem schwebende Weltgesetz*]’. (SW XII 142) Thus the mere non-being subject, the $\mu\eta\ \delta\upsilon\nu$ as the non-knowing of which all consciousness and all philosophy begins, is that on which the universe hinges. This is the true content of existential cosmology. At this crucial juncture, Schelling’s *Initia Philosophiae Universae* insist: ‘Here we part with the concept of the dialectician. Here is the point where no longer concept, where only action decides. The realm of the concept has ended and the realm of action begins.’ (INI 116)

Meta-Narrative: The Time of Decision

‘The nearest already points to an incredibly high past. The Earth, according to its current constitution and appearance, is a work of time, where in an unthinkable succession each later one covered up the earlier; nowhere something originary shows itself, one is always set atop of another, one become ground for another not without being transformed in this submission. Has the Earth passed through so many times, how may we come to know even the least of the present without a derivation from the past. The peculiarities of some distinguished personalities appear to us as incomprehensible unless we learn about the special circumstances in which they have become and have taken shape. And getting to the ground of nature should be so easy? A high work of antiquity stands before us as an incomprehensible whole until we unravel the kind of its growth and of its gradual generation. Which wholly other implications must there be in such a manifoldly composed whole like the Earth already is. All down to the grain of sand must carry determinations which can impossibly be disclosed without having, as it were, followed back the current of creative nature to it. In a whole in which all and each shows the imprint of rhythmically following times, nothing can be taken as solitary, nothing for itself. All is only a work of time and only the time to which each belongs accords it its peculiarity and meaning. But what of Earth is valid is so in much higher measure of the Universe, namely that it is a work of times, where each has become ground for another, each emerging later time arisen above the perishing earlier time, until through advancing progression this whole accrued, merely incomprehensible and miraculous if viewed from the present being. Thus even general comprehension (the least the human demands of himself) is impossible without a complete genealogy of the current state of things and this in turn not without excavating in thoughts the entire edifice of times, so as to fathom the last ground.’

F.W.J. Schelling, *Ages of the World*

(WF NL81 169)

The reconstruction of the cosmogenetic process has not yet reached its conclusion. In the genetic development of the doctrine of powers, we reached a point at which the proto-logical development required the introduction of time. This is a crucial point for the whole development, as it is here where the proto-logic of powers, grounded on the ontological proof of chaos, is expanded into a translogical meta-narrative capable of grasping the historical becoming of the cosmos as a symbolic and aesthetic unfolding of ideas hence rendering possible the articulation of a New Mythology as holographic cosmology. Schelling often insists on the absolute centrality of time. Thus in the *Freedom Essay* of 1809 Schelling criticises ‘the whole of the new-European philosophy’ for its ‘common lack’ [*ihr gemeinschaftlicher Mangel*] of a ‘living ground’, which is nothing but the living and creative time, or the view of nature as living time that Schelling’s *Philosophy of Nature* seeks to develop. (SW VII 356) The transformation of metaphysics from the Parmenidean and rationalist contemplation of eternal essences into a vibrant and dynamic existential metaphysics hinges on this question, and as Schelling notes in the *Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, ‘before the pulses of time do not beat vividly again, science can not attain its vitality and its completion.’ (PP 90) This is because, as a phrase that appears in all the fragments of the *Ages of the World* claims, ‘all is only a work of time and only the time to which each belongs accords it its peculiarity and meaning’ –, and indeed the Schellingian metaphysics accords an importance and significance to time that is hitherto unprecedented in the history of philosophy.¹⁰² (WA 12, WA 122) In fact the *Ages of the World*, Schelling’s

¹⁰² However, the systematic focus on the problem of time is not at all uncommon in the following post-idealist philosophy, on the contrary, time can even be seen as defining the problem-horizon of most, if not all, philosophical projects that emerge in the wake of Hegel, whose thought – albeit radically historical, and in this regard absolutely modern – can be seen as perhaps the last great classical vision of all truth *sub specie aeterni*. But the true grounding of the problem of time in modern philosophy lies in Kant, to whom both Schelling and Hegel are only responding, and whose antinomic thought is in fact the articulation of the philosophy of a modern subject punctured and fragmented by a temporal tension constitutive of its self-experience. Thus in Kant, the strictly temporal character of the unity of experience, generated by the syntheses of productive imagination, is counterposed to a reflective judgment on the purpose of life that figures as a timeless horizon beyond all experience. The ensuing tension, the tension between a radically temporal experience and the awareness of a necessary extra-temporal horizon of meaning, can be seen as the problematic subtext of all post-Kantian philosophy of the subject. Thus Peter Osborne’s *Politics of Time* (Osborne 2010) constructs

most ambitious work of pure metaphysics, is a work that (as historically the first of its kind) focuses entirely on the problematic of time and eternity. The philosophical investigation of time is what Schelling sees as the great omission of metaphysics, hence calling time the ‘bad conscience’ of ‘immature metaphysics [*unmündige Metaphysik*]’ and concluding that ‘a mature philosophy can not be thought without a real analysis and arrangement of time.’ (PP 90) As we proceed into the last stage of our study, we discover how, next to the doctrine of powers, this real analysis and investigation of time becomes in Schelling the decisive element of post-critical metaphysics. If the doctrine of powers is the foundational structure of existential cosmology, the philosophy of time is its very edifice, insofar as it is through the philosophy of time that the holographic vision of the emerging cosmos takes shape and unfolds, and it is through the analysis and investigation of time that Schelling articulates a translogical *Wissenschaft* and ἐπιστήμη of ideas.

If we succeed in reconstructing this new, radically temporalised, doctrine of ideas, we will have accomplished the goal that we set for ourselves, to demonstrate the transformation of metaphysics and the foundation of the project of existential cosmology by Schelling. In the preceding development of the cosmogenetic process we reached the insight that according to the immanent drive or necessity of the process – which is a process that strives for the highest self-knowledge or subjectness, or for the complete actualisation of the primal A and of its unprethinkable freedom – there would be no further development if the B was not posited and the A could just pass through the three powers and right into a final $A=A$. As we noted, there was no logical necessity for the existence of the world. Rather it is only the facticity of the world and the prevalence of objectness, of that blind being of the B, in the world, that convinces us that in the scission between A and B, the B is posited, thus initiating the perpetual and perpetually perturbed circulation of the powers that seek to attain the absolute

the general field of post-Kantian philosophy as responding to a constitutive dialectics of time and eternity, the terms of engagement or disengagement of which figure as the decisive political stakes of contemporary philosophy. A book that must be read as the exact *Gegenbild* or counter-image to Osborne’s *Politics of Time* is Eric Alliez’ *Capital Times*, (Alliez 1996) which, through an archaeology of ancient, hellenistic and medieval philosophy, interprets pre-Kantian philosophy as the progressive subjectivation and politisation of time and eternity. While Osborne reveals the temporal subtext of political philosophy, Alliez demonstrates the political essence of the philosophy of time. The metaphysics of time presented in this study responds to the paradoxical synergy between these two projects.

freedom of the A=A but cannot since there is something that remains constitutively outside of these powers. This is the sense of the Schelling conception of the ‘merely *actu* necessary’ or the ‘contingently necessary’ of that we spoke earlier, (SW XIV 338) and which comes to replace the necessity of necessity of classical and rationalist metaphysics. The structure of reality, as structured by the powers A^1 , A^2 and A^3 , is necessary, but this necessity is itself contingent insofar as no reality (neither as a whole, nor in the singular) exists necessarily. Yet what is and remains necessary – as dictated by the absolute necessity of the unprethinkable decision, proved by the ontological proof chaos – is the decision to either stay in inwardness and blind possibility, or to step into externality and actuality, that is, to step into time, is strictly necessary.

This is the ‘great decision’ that is the founding problem of the *Ages of the World*, (SW VIII 245, WA 178) what in the *Initia Philosophiae Universae* is called the ‘great moment of decision’ when ‘time and eternity itself stood on the balance’ and it was to be decided which should remain internal and which become external. (INI 115) In the factual decision in which B is posited, the *Urzufall* of primal contingency has posited the blind being of the object and the ‘real natural creation’ [*die eigentliche Naturschöpfung*] begins, (PP 363) the process of overcoming the B through the proto-logical necessity of A^1 , A^2 and A^3 does now no longer merely take place in the ether of eternal possibility but has now become an actual, progressive, and *temporal* process – the rotation that was in the inwardness and eternity of the unprethinkably past, now ejects lines of becoming, lines of flight, that are the lines of time. This act or decision, this great event, this ‘happening through which that which wants to prove itself absolutely internally is first expelled’ is what Schelling often calls, with a Biblical expression, the καταβολή τοῦ κόσμου – the catabole, i.e. the foundation, grounding or also submission, of the world. (PP 363) It is a submission because where ‘that which previously exclusively wanted to be subject = A’ has now made itself ‘actually = B (opposite of A, of subject)’ and as such it has now been submitted or thrown to the ground as the *matter* on which the higher, namely the higher power of A^2 , instantly begins to act and assert itself in order to once again posit the A where the B was, carrying the process further.¹⁰³ (SW X 346)

¹⁰³ But we must remember that everything what is object in one regard, is subject in another, as subject and object are what Schelling calls transitive beings – all except the absolute subject of the ὄντως Ὄν which is precisely not transitive but absolute. But since this absolute subject is constitutively unknowable (apart from the negative non-knowing) we can say that despite the seemingly idealist designation of the first contingency as absolute subject,

Schelling continues in the *Presentation of the Natural Process* of 1843 – his late work of *Naturphilosophie* and his final philosophical presentation of the genesis of the universe – that this event or great decision is ‘an eternal and everlasting actus perpetually occurring again’ which is proved by ‘the perpetual motion of the world-system that is nothing but the perpetual, everlasting καταβολή τοῦ κόσμου, relating to the succeeding becoming like a perpetual grounding and hence like an eternity.’ (SW X 346) The crucial point is that we must not imagine the decision for time as something that happened at a particular point in time. The καταβολή τοῦ κόσμου is not the big bang that occurred 15 billion years ago. It is the perpetually new emergence of time in each occurrence, in each event, in each moment and each part of time. This is the problem of the ‘beginning of time’ that especially the first draft of the *Ages of the World* (of 1811) battles with intensively, and that, as Schelling sees, can only be a ‘beginning that cannot cease to be a beginning but is always an equally eternal beginning’. (WA 78) Therefore, as again the *Presentation of the Natural Process* develops in great detail, ‘the world is by nature of the beginning [*anfänglich*], because it can not be if not through the transition *a potentia ad actum*, that is, from the non-being to being’, or as we have said above, from A to B. (SW X 344) Of this beginning of time *Schelling* continues to say:

‘The beginning that has been supposed here, is not a passing one, that once was a beginning and then is not anymore, but it is a beginning that is always a beginning, because it is posited by the nature of the world... but what is non-being in itself, is naturally of the beginning [*anfänglich*], even if it has never begun according to time; it would be of the beginning, even if it has existed of infinite time, and inversely it is not in this sense of the beginning because it has begun to exist in a determinate time, it would be of the beginning in every time, however long we would go back.’ (SW X 344)

This also contains the Schellingian response to the Kantian antinomy of the beginning, which says that there is dialectical deadlock between the two propositions: 1) the world has a beginning in time and is enclosed in spatial boundaries, and 2) the world has no beginning and has no boundaries in space, but is both in regards of time and space infinite. (AA A426-

we are dealing here with a decisively post-idealist philosophy of the subject, for Schelling there is no *actual* subject that would not also be in a different regard object. This objectification, with the Marxian tradition we can call it reification or *Verdinglichung* – of all subjects, is in the Schellingian conception only overcome at the eschatological finality in which all existence becomes absolute subject.

427/B454-455) Schelling maintains that this opposition only appears unresolvable to Kant because Kant has previously himself reduced his concept of the world to the empirical world or the world in our perception and representation, only to then present his implicit assumption as the solution to the antinomy (a critique already presented rigorously by Hegel in the *Science of Logic*, HW V 271 ff.). Thus Kant's antinomy actually only refers to the question of the infinity or finitude of the material or 'visible' universe to use the Platonic term, it has nothing to say about the intelligible universe or *κοσμος νοετος* that we constructed above as composed purely of the powers, in view of which both of the propositions of the intellect are true, namely that the world has a beginning and boundaries (but not one in time or space) and that the world has no beginning and no boundaries (namely none in time and space).¹⁰⁴ Schelling also compares this relation to the limitation of the physical infinity by a higher order of infinity, saying that 'there is not just one infinity, there are infinities of different order, where the infinity of the lower is against the infinity of the higher again like a finitude' adding the surprisingly prescient analogy that 'like in mathematics the infinity of the first order relates to that of the second order again like a finite magnitude.' (SW X 340)¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ What Schelling hence asks us to do is to think an immaterial or non-empirical boundary to the material and empirical world. A similar thought has surfaced in contemporary physics where one of the dominant interpretations of the big bang, namely the so-called no boundary condition first theorised by Stephen Hawking as a transposition of the infinite curvature of space in relativistic cosmology to the problematic of time, precisely says that the initial singularity of the big bang (at which all the laws of physics break down) should not be thought as a point in time but as a beginning of time that is itself not in time. As much as the speculative philosophy of nature of both Schelling and Hegel can be said to have anticipated a number of insights of modern physics, yet our sharp distinction, made above between the metaphysical eternal beginning and the physical theories of the beginning, or also between the *Urzufall* and the big bang, remains. For what Hawking is suggesting for the big bang, should, according to Schelling's philosophy of time, be thought of *all* of time, Schelling's point is precisely that all of time, each occurrence, each event in time, is grounded in a beginning that is itself not in time. On the productive synergies between Schelling's speculative view of nature and the more speculative strands of contemporary physics see Rainer Zimmermann's *Die Rekonstruktion von Raum, Zeit und Materie*. (Zimmermann 1998)

¹⁰⁵ It is not clear which mathematical orders of infinity Schelling is referring to here, since (speaking in 1843) the Cantorian theory of the transfinite had not yet been invented. However, it is likely that Schelling knew of Brentano's considerations of the mathematical infinite,

Hence what provides the boundary to the infinity of the physical universe is – in the point of scission within the powers between the A and the B – the higher order infinity of the intelligible powers. About the *καταβολὴ τοῦ κόσμου* in which the B is posited as the object that makes itself the ground of the circulatory movement of powers, Schelling also says that it is the setting the powers into tension, that which brings a tension into the powers or reverses them from their possible unity that could be thought as an $A = A$ (if the B had not been posited) and that hence could be thought of as a oneness or simply as the One – the *τὸ ἐν*. The process in which the ‘pre-actual being’, namely the A, is reversed into the B, and in which the One is set into tension, can ‘hence be called the *Universio*’ and ‘the immediate result of the process is the reversed One – *Unum Versum*, the universe.’ (SW X 311) Thus Schelling derives the concept of the universe out the doctrine of powers, or rather finds the basic metaphysical conception of the doctrine of powers as already etymologically given in the concept of the universe. (see also SW XII 92, SW XI 398) In the sense that the cosmogenetic process incessantly produces the world out of the perpetual crisis of an inwardly, blindly-existing being, which posits through scission the reality of the external, and the power that strives beyond this reality, ‘the world is the *unum versum*, and the act of this reversal is the *universio*’ (Pa 540). We see thus that the universe posits the decision and the antagonism between irreconcilable forces at the very core of each and every being, and that everything that is, is this battle that posits in it a living and creative time. Hence in the *Ages of the World*, Schelling describes the antagonistic nature of time as productive force like this:

‘Whoever takes time just as it presents itself, feels in it a battle [*einen Widerstreit*] of two principles; one that strives forward, drives to unfolding and one that arrests, retards, and resists the unfolding. If this other did not resist, there would be no time because the unfolding would happen at once, without step and succession; but if this other was not also perpetually overcome by the first, there would be absolute rest, death, stasis and

which are seen as the precursor to Cantor and as the first conception of different orders of infinity. At any rate, Schelling’s comparison is highly relevant, in that the theory of orders of infinity (already speculatively or purely discursively produced by Hegel’s *Logic* and its central theorem of the good and the bad infinity) allows for a resolution to the Kantian antinomies – however, the theory of the orders of infinity leads itself into new antinomies that arguably reproduce the (quite basic) structure of the Kantian antinomy at a higher level, most prominently the paradox discovered by Russell and Gödel’s incompleteness.

hence also again no time. If we think these two principles as active in one and the same being [*demselden Wesen*], we have right away the contradiction. But it is necessary to think them in all that is, yes, in being itself. – all that is, all Being [*alles Seyende*] at once wants to go inside itself and outside itself. It wants to go inside by positing itself or taking itself together as Being [*als Seyendes*], as subject; insofar it resists the unfolding and the expansion; it wants to go outside itself, by desiring to be also again that which it is internally, namely externally.’ (WA 102)

What we can see here at work, is nothing but the temporalisation and thus the actualisation of the cosmogenetic process. What we developed above in the context of a pure reconstruction of the proto-logic of powers, is put into action in each and every being, insofar as the drive to know and have itself of the A is translated into the antagonism between the A and the B and the perpetual and rotary return to the point of decision, the perpetual repetition of the cycle in which each repetition is perturbed by another crisis, becomes the creative principle of unfolding and development in each being. The A always again is driven to posit itself as a B, in the mistaken view that thereby it could have and know itself, and always again the higher powers of the A enforce the decision against and beyond the B. What we discovered above as the *Mitwissenschaft* in the process of crisis, the process of position and excision, is not only the generative principle of knowledge but it is the life of life, the universally genetic principle, and as such it is, as the *Ages of the World* say, ‘the fate of all life, that it first demands limitation from openness into closedness, in order to grasp itself; then, after it is in the closedness and has perceived it, again demands to be back in the open and at once wants to return into the silent nothing, in which it was before, but cannot, because it would have to give up its own life.’ (WA I 34) The essence of creative time lies in this perpetual striving into opposed directions, beyond the self and returning to the self. Once we have grasped the proto-logical rotation of the powers as this process of temporalisation we can see how the obsessive compulsive circulation of the powers sets things, insofar as all things are composed of the powers, into being and propels their unfolding forward. The generative rotary movement without relief, the incessant repetition of difference, is described in rich images in the *Ages of the World* as a chaotic wheel of primal nature:

‘These are the forces of that inner life ceaselessly giving birth to itself and devouring itself again, that the human must intimate as that hidden in everything, although it is now covered and has externally taken on calm properties. Through that constant return

to the beginning and the eternal rebeginning [*Wiederbeginnen*] it makes itself substance in the proper sense [*im eigentlichen Verstande*] (*id quod substat*), to the always persisting; it is the constant inner drive and clockwork, the eternally beginning, eternally becoming, always self-devouring and always self-generating time. Eternally the opposition generates itself, to always again be devoured by the unity, and eternally the opposition is devoured by the unity, to always live again.' (SW VIII 230)

In this constant rotation between the position of opposition and the return to unity, in this constant death and birth of the phoenix of nature, strictly speaking it is the Must Be of the A^2 , that always again enforces the decision and thus drives the process, since it enforces the principle of contradiction and the necessity to choose between contradictories. But if we speak of the contradiction as the principle of motion in time and in life, it is necessary to once again return to the continuous thread throughout this entire study, of the rivalry on the conception of post-critical metaphysics between Schelling and Hegel. For, despite apparent similarities, we are not at all here speaking of the Hegelian contradiction and its dialectical resolutions as what Hegel calls 'the principle of all self-movement' and 'the root of all life and all movement'. (HW VI 75-76) The radically anti-Hegelian thesis of the *Ages of the World* is that time and contradiction are equiprimordial, [*gleich ursprünglich*] or that the true metaphysical meaning of the principle of contradiction, as opposed to its merely logical meaning, is that in the situation of real antagonism, a real decision must be made, and this decision, this response to the pressures asserted by antagonism, is the principle of real (and not logical) movement. (SW VII 220, SW VII 230, WA 124) In Hegel the contradiction is a logical principle, as we saw above, it is the engine of the intra-reflexive Absolute. But as such, always taking place in infinite reflexion or in the eternity of logical reflexion, it has always already been sublated and mediated in the movement towards the speculative concept that is, as objectivity and as the life of the idea, the becoming that externalises itself into nature and subsequently animates the natural and historical world. Hence the contradiction that in Hegel makes the transition from the timeless ether of thought into the time of the world, is always this movement of mediation that is already moving towards its ultimate telos – the idea. On the contrary, for Schelling 'contradiction without active antagonism is unthinkable'. (WA 126) The principle of contradiction is here understood as a principle of a primal antagonism which is itself equiprimordial with thought, or in which thought is first to emerge and stabilise itself *in the same movement* in which reality emerges (the cosmogenetic

process is always also a logogenetic process, and as we saw above).¹⁰⁶ This is why there can strictly be no speculative logic, but only a proto-logic. Logic cannot already comprehend time before and without time. Time and logic must co-emerge, the emergence of time is itself nothing but the genesis of thought, and proto-logic is nothing but the construction of this movement, not before the emergence of time in some timeless ether, but in and through the scission that is the ground of co-emergence of both time and thought – the laws of thought are themselves positive, they are posited in the scission through which time emerges, ‘logic itself is just a positive science’, (PP 296). Each scission, each event and each crisis is a temporary and temporalising co-production of thought and reality, or a reduplication of X into A = B as we have constructed it above through the existential proposition. The distinction is of crucial importance and we must investigate it further so that we can grasp the true stakes of Schelling’s philosophy of time. Let us see how Schelling speaks, in the *Grounding of Positive Philosophy* of Hegel’s conception of becoming:

¹⁰⁶ We can say that Schelling’s grasp of the principle of contradiction is hence diametrically opposed to Hegel’s conception. For Schelling, the logical contradiction is harmless, it is an abstraction of thought that applies to particular formal languages prescribing (by convention) the rules of the formalism, it is this logical contradiction about which Deleuze says that it has never killed anyone. The metaphysical meaning of the principle of contradiction however is that in the point of decision between antagonistic forces, in the situation of A vs. B, a decision must be made for one or the other. This is already the protest of the *Freedom Essay* against Hegel’s conception of freedom in the *Phenomenology*, where Schelling insists (anticipating Kierkegaard) that the real freedom has the structure of an Either/Or, or as he says here (implicitly criticising the enlightenment view of freedom as purely benevolent capacity) ‘the capacity for good and evil’, (SW VII 352) whereas in Hegel the contradiction always mediates and sublates itself further in the timeless logical ether without ever clearly and unambiguously showing itself in one situation. To be sure, Schelling too thinks the mediation of the contradiction, namely in the A^3 which is the power of the mediation of mediation. But the point is that the A^3 only acts after the A^2 has enforced a decision, and since in Schelling we have no separation of the logical and the real development, as in Hegel, the after means also a chronological and not just a logical after. First the real decision, the Either/Or must be made, and only then the third of the mediation of mediation can do its work and transform the situation into a Neither/Nor, but if one waits for the the mediation to occur without decision, then nothing will happen, or even worse, the antagonistic force will decide the situation in its own favour.

‘The Hegelian “Logic” was generated by its author through an abstraction, *in that he separated the logical and the real becoming*. This “Logic” is an attempt that fails from the outset, because the separation of the logical and the real becoming is itself false. It itself acknowledges that it is not the real grounding, when it deems a transition necessary. It shows that this transition is unnatural through the unnatural definition. The last sense is: in order to grasp the world, we must return to those merely logical momenta. Therein is no actual succession. But because we have thus only the logical idea, we must imagine that the logic “alienates” [*sich “entfremde”*] itself in order to become real. This leap only appeared to *actually* take place. But the last moment teaches us that all this has not actually happened. This is rather the subjective necessity of *thought*. In the last idea all actual progress is sublated and in the last moment the idealism falls back openly and without any timidity into subjective idealism. At the end we stand where we already stood with Spinoza. *The whole system is an ideally rewritten Spinozism*. I call this a sad result; because when all happening can be grasped as illusion [*alles Geschehen als Schein*], when the entire, actual world is only posited as a mere necessity of thought, then we are entirely enclosed in the sad circle of appearances that the idea cannot break. This system leaves neither to the world nor to the individual a true future.’ (PP 234)

We see that what Schelling identifies as Hegel’s main mistake is to have ‘separated the logical and the real becoming’, that is to say, Hegel’s project ‘fails from the outset’ precisely because it thinks the principle of movement in the purely logical development of the concept. It is true that for Hegel too, tension and opposition are the generators of all movement, however the opposition is thought by him as one entirely internal to reflexion and, as we saw above, the intra-reflexive being of Hegel’s absolute idea is still without time or actual becoming. It must only decide (for whatever reason) to step out into time and into nature. Before the idea makes this step – through which time begins and through which we are no longer in the thoughts of God before the creation of the world but instead now in the currents of life and the actual becoming of the world – the idea has already resolved all oppositions in itself, it has already reached the resolution of all contradictions. Hence once it steps into nature and into history it already has all the responses to anything that can happen to it, there is no risk involved for the idea, as Schelling says elsewhere. (SW X 153) The results can be seen in Hegel’s *Philosophy of History*, where according to Schelling’s critique in the *Philosophy of Mythology* Hegel

lacks all living development and instead ‘as soon as he gets into the real and is left to the devices of his own invention’ falls ‘in the most grave manner’ into ‘what he himself criticises the most’ namely the ‘mere application of a scheme taken from elsewhere unto history’, producing the ‘empty formulas of orientalism and occidentalism and the like, e.g. that in the first period of history the infinite reigned, in the second the finite, in the third the unity of both’, which is evidently a scheme taken from the development of reflexion in the *Science of Logic*. (SW XI 232)

But the most significant result of this separation of logical and real development, or rather of the entirely intra-logical articulation of development which is then applied unto the real, is the complete negation of what Schelling calls ‘a true future’, for as the *Phenomenology of Spirit* says, in the fully unfolded development of the absolute, when time is ‘grasped by the pure concept’, time is ‘eliminated’ [*die Zeit getilgt*], which means that all of time, past, present and future is sublated into the logical eternity of the concept. (HW III 584) This reduction of all time to a logical eternity and the concomitant elimination of a true past (that is, a past which is not fully sublated and preserved in the present) and a true future (a future that is not already implicitly contained in the present) is what Schelling means in the longer quoted passage above by the ‘sad result’ that we find ourselves enclosed in a circle that we cannot break, and from which all the facticity of history and of existence appear as illusions. Thus to Hegel’s ‘sadness’ about the ‘thought of the finitude that the things carry’ in themselves and the ‘satisfaction’ that thought finds when it has overcome the ‘circle of finitude’ and discovered the infinity of everything, (HW V 140, HW V 151) Schelling responds, in the name of post-idealist philosophy, by raising the spectre of a sadness of eternity, the sadness of a thought that has attained eternity but has lost all the openness and contingency of a living time. Once again, the reason for the rejection of this philosophy of time is the conception of history that it requires and entails. In the *Philosophy of Mythology*, where Schelling presents not only his critique of Hegel but more generally of a conception of history that is constitutive for modernity, Schelling – after having rejected ‘the actualisation of a perfect legal constitution or the perfect development of the concept of freedom and everything alike’ as too ‘groundless and meagre’ for the unfolding of spirit to find a final point of rest in them – criticises a philosophy for which ‘history has no true future at all, but everything proceeds into infinity, since it is a progress without boundaries – but hence also a meaningless progress – a proceeding without ceasing and stopping, in which something truly novel and different could begin’. (SW XI 230)

This malaise of the progressivist illusion of modernity appears not just in philosophically reflected form Hegel's thought but is also 'a general article of faith of the contemporary wisdom.' (ibid) The critique of this illusion can be seen as the necessary extension of the critique of cosmic reason, since the modern belief in infinite ameliorationist progress has the same psychopolitical function as God's classical guarantee of harmonious world-order, a point proven conclusively by Hegel's modern and post-critical proof of God which essentially is an ontological proof of the infinite benevolence of history.¹⁰⁷ While the *Ages of the World* overthrows this paradigmatic modern conception of time, including that of Hegel, and attempts to produce a markedly transmodern philosophy of time, some of the later lectures such as the *Erlangen Lectures* of 1820, the *System of the Ages of the World* of 1828, and the *Grounding of Positive Philosophy* of 1832 deliver the full explication of the critique. In the *Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, Schelling insists that a conception of time where 'past, present and future are merely relational concepts with regards to the current state' is one in which 'the world does not go beyond itself, not beyond the one time in that it is enclosed'. (PP 88) Schelling explains this further in this section:

'Αἰών means as well ,time' as ,world'. What we generally call 'world' is really [*eigentlich*] *only one* time, in which there is neither a true past nor a true future. Because in it, only that is repeated which *is* [*was geschehen ist*]. We can hence view the current

¹⁰⁷ It is important to point out, with Benjamin, that the illusion of progress is dialectically complemented by the the illusion of eternal return, forming together the constitutive antinomy that defines the self-understanding of modernity (accordingly Hegel and Nietzsche are the paradigmatic thinkers of modernity, they provide, in an opposed but complementary manner, its metaphysical justification) – see especially Konvolut N of *Passagen-Werk* (Benjamin 1982) and the Theses on History (in Benjamin 2007). Both eternal progress and eternal return de facto hypostasise the time of the present progression, the time of what Schelling calls the Aeon of the Present, to the one and only eternity, where only once this eternalisation occurs under the governing sovereignty of an expanded reason and once under a return to the sheer presence of the powers of nature and mythology. But as Benjamin has pointed out, from the point of view of messianic history, the illusion of progress is still too mythological and the illusion of eternal return is still too rational. For as in Schelling's *Philosophy of Mythology*, what stands between the eternal past of myth, and the eternal presence of reason, is only the openness and the infinite possibility of an absolute futurity.

world as one time which is caught up in the constant but futile striving to bring about its true future, or to bring about a time that cannot consist as present but is determined to become past. But *that* too it can not; it only posits always again itself. Because to such a time nothing remains but to incessantly posit itself *again*. The whole world is negated in each moment, as it were. Hereby a series and succession is generated, the schema of which is the series A+A+A. A= the time of the world itself; A+A= the world, in which the world just always repeats itself. The first A should be posited as *past* and instead a B should be posited; but the world can not do this, it can only ever posit itself as A. The constant repetition of the one time equal A is surely *also* a time, yes this time is just that which we *commonly* call time, it is the maintenance of the one time equal A. But it is a negation, a obstruction of the *true* time. Because the time that would posit a true *going-beyond* would be *that* time in which the time A is posited as true past. It would be like the series A+B+C. (PP 89) ¹⁰⁸

The time of perpetual progress is a time that perpetually just reproduces itself, it is the eternal return of eternal progress, but in this succession without radical break or absolute alterity, nothing genuinely new is ever produced. This time of the A+A+A is the ceaseless reproduction of the same, the repetition without difference and the process without true end or goal (that is to say, not one which is already implicitly contained in the present). Of this 'common time' or abstract 'mechanical time', Schelling says in the *Ages of the World*, that it is merely a *Scheinbild*, an illusory image, produced through 'comparison and measurement of different times'. (WA 78-79) Contrary to this mechanical time of measurement, the true view of time – as we saw above – is that the act of scission 'posits a time in the things' and that hence 'each particular thing has from the beginning its own centre of time' and that 'its time too is in each moment its whole time, and becoming in times it yet does not become in time', (it is clear that Leibniz' monadology is always a silent presence in Schelling's existential cosmology).¹⁰⁹ (ibid) Hence the view of time that governs our common representations, but

¹⁰⁸ The use of the capital letter does not refer here to the powers or to the A=B of the primal scission. Like Fichte, Schelling has a habit of using capital letters for the plastic presentation of logical arguments.

¹⁰⁹ Schelling notes, in this context, that Kant made a great advance with regards to preceding philosophy by recognising the subjective nature of space and time, however Kant's failure was not to recognise what Schelling calls the 'universal subjectivity of time', that is, the real positing of a subjective time by each and every being through the act of scission, and instead

also the pre-Einsteinian physical representations (the abstract time of Newtonian succession), and the sociohistorical and socioeconomic reality of industrialised society (nowhere better presented than in Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*) is according to Schelling 'merely a manner of our representation, not a necessary and inborn, but a contingent and adopted one'. (WA 79) Now the significance of Hegel in this regard lies in that, whereas what Schelling calls the 'common' view of time generally figures as the presupposition of unreflected thought, or as the insufficiently reflected assumption of rationalist philosophy, in Hegel it is the product of a vast systematic reflexion which itself paradoxically purports to be a thought of dynamic becoming but de facto results in a logical eternalisation of time that cannot think time apart from the position of the (logical) present (in the sense that inside the *Logic* there is no time, all thoughts are ever-present).¹¹⁰ Thus eternalisation of the present by necessity entails the eternalisation of the rationality of the present, and herein lies the implicit justification of the world as it is, articulated in Hegel's *Philosophy of History* that is a 'true theodicy, a justification of God in history' which reconciles God and history precisely insofar as it proves that the world as it is and as it unfolds is already in the absolute eternity or is already in God. (HW XII 540) The possibility of redemption, the cancellation or sublation of the evil and the misery of history, of those piles and piles of ruins and corpses stacked atop of each other that the angel of history passes by, on this view, lies simply in the further explication of what is already given.

We now retrospectively discover the motivation behind Schelling's virulent critique of the Hegelian superior ontological proof of God. It lies exactly in the objection to this rational theodicy and to the view of history and humanity that it entails. Where Hegel sees the gradual

considered time as merely relatively subjective (or only subjective in representation). (WA 78) It is clear that once the position of the 'universal subjectivity' of time is adopted – it is also the position of Bergson, Whitehead or Deleuze – all the objections against the reality of time, from Parmenides and Zeno onwards, become baseless, as it is only the time of succession that the rationalisms of time are targetting, and which they eventually need to sublimate, in some form or another, into a logical presence.

¹¹⁰ This is why Heidegger calls Hegel's philosophy of time 'the most radical' of all 'vulgar' conceptions of time. See § 82 of *Being and Time*. Schelling's critique of Hegel's concept of time in the *Grounding of Positive Philosophy* (lecture 5 of the first cycle and lecture 36 of the second cycle) is much more schematic than Heidegger's careful deconstruction, but it is thematically and argumentatively largely accordant.

actualisation of freedom in history, Schelling sees the ubiquitous rule of the B, of the merely objective and instrumental, in all human affairs (and as already the *Freedom Essay* develops, it is the elevation of the B, of the dark, material ground, to final and self-sufficient purpose, cut of from the ‘universal will’ of freedom, or the cosmic will of $A = A$, wherein the possibility of evil resides, SW VII 363 ff.).¹¹¹ With the collapse of the ontological proof of God and the principle of sufficient reason, the original question of theodicy – not the question of why there is evil, but the question of why there is anything at all, how God justifies the existence of anything at all, is radically ungrounded in Schelling. We witness in the dark reflexions of the *Philosophy of Revelation* and the *Philosophy of Mythology* the horror of a thought that discovers nothing but the gaping abyss beneath itself. In Schelling, the question of theodicy becomes a question of desperation:

“Far from making the world comprehensible through his actions, man himself is the most incomprehensible, and it is he who drives me inexorably to the opinion of the unblessedness of all being, an opinion, which resonates with so many painful voices from old and newer times. It is precisely him, man, who drives me to that last desperate question: Why is there anything at all? Why is not nothing?” (SW XIII 7)

We should note that there is an interesting change of perspective involved in Schelling’s question. Since, in the ontological proof of chaos, the God that can be known to exist has been

¹¹¹ Now, of course a contemporary engagement with Schelling has to always keep in mind that the prevalence of the ‘merely objective’ in all human affairs it is not a sociological or anthropological question for Schelling but a purely metaphysical one. Yet it is undeniable that the questions of anthropogony and anthropology figure prominently at the very heart of Schelling’s thinking, not only in explicit works such as the *Stuttgart Private Lectures* of 1810 or the short but important *Anthropological Scheme* of 1840, but more generally in all of Schelling’s existential cosmology, which is always also a fundamental metaphysics of the human and of the ‘eccentric positionality’ of the human within the universe, to use the term coined by Arnold Gehlen. It is precisely this unapologetically metaphysical grounding of the question of the human which differentiates the Schellingian mode of thought from the approaches to philosophical anthropology developed in the twentieth century by thinkers like Gehlen, Scheler, or also Heidegger to some extent, and which, among thinkers of the twentieth century likens it to none except anomalous and untimely metaphysical attempts, such as the psycho-cosmology of Deleuze and Guattari.

reduced to the position of radical contingency, to the blindly-existing and unprethinkable sheer being without any qualities and attributes, and since the coming of a real God (a God of benevolence, justice, and so on) has been postponed into a possible future, it is no longer God who has to justify the existence of the world, but humanity, for it is humanity in which spirit, the power of that which Shall Be, of the A^3 , is the most present and the most active amongst worldly entities, and it is only the freedom of humanity to posit the Shall Not Be, and decide against the $A=A$, or rather decide for the elevation of the B to isolated and sole purpose, that proves the 'unblessedness of all being'. The world as it unfolds in recorded history can not justify its own existence. But, with a word of Hölderlin (always again Hölderlin, as if the mature Schelling wanted to become the voice that the friend had lost together with his sanity) Schelling says that 'where there is no danger, there is also no salvation' [*wo keine Gefahr, da ist auch keine Rettung*, adapting Hölderlin's *Wo die Gefahr wächst, da wächst auch das Rettende*] and if 'there was no possibility of the blind-being' (by which Schelling here means the eternal lapse into the B, forsaking the actualisation of freedom forever) 'then a God would not be needed. Because God is not the force [*die Gewalt*] of the good, but of the better (Plato)'. (PP 333) God is not the force of the good, but of the better. That is to say, God is not to guarantee the goodness of the world as it is, God is not to justify its existence (since he cannot, it is posited as a blindly-existing, the dark ground in the not-yet existent God himself is this blindly-existing) but rather God, as 'the God who is not, but who will be' and due to whom 'all anticipate a future salvation', is to justify the universe only in the absolute futurity of his coming (but then fully and entirely).¹¹² (SW XI 177)

¹¹² It is well known that the thought of the late Heidegger circles around the coming God, the thought that figures prominently at the end of *Beiträge zur Philosophie*. (Heidegger 2003) The full range of possibilities offered by Heidegger's late thought cannot be gauged yet since the last of the cycle of the seven main tomes of the late philosophy has only been edited and published a few years ago. However, a difference that is evident between Heidegger's and Schelling's coming God is that for the latter the world participates in the coming of God, or rather the history of the world is nothing but a battle for the actualisation of the coming God, or for the actualisation of the Shall Be in all affairs and in all reality. While the late Schelling – as part of the generation of radical romantic thinkers who turned to conservatives as they matured, and as the German revolution of 1848 failed – himself progressively loses faith in the possibility and necessity for active engagement in this battle (instead suggesting retreat into art, science and spirituality) as Manfred Frank has shown, thinkers like the French socialist Pierre Leroux or Schelling's student in Berlin, Mikhail Bakunin, saw the political

But if this thought is to be sustained, it cannot be that the time of the present, extended infinitely into past and future, is already all of time. Schelling insists that a ‘truly historical philosophy’ depends on the ability to think a time before the world and a time after the world, and that a philosophy that does not see ‘the current order as necessary’ must view ‘the world as something that could as well also not be’ and hence that ‘it also was *not* once.’ (PP 87, PP 91) But this cannot be thought without a time beyond the current world, beyond the past and the future of linear succession, there must be thought a radically different or an absolute past and absolute future. Or, as the *Grounding of Positive Philosophy* continues, ‘all past and all future within the world is only a relative, an always becoming, a never being. The true past is just the one that was before the world, the true future the one that will be *after* the world.’ (PP 91) The envisioning and articulation of this system of times beyond and before the world, is the task that the *Ages of the World* have set for themselves. The central thesis of this work, and of Schelling’s metaphysics of time and radically temporal metaphysics, is precisely that the true metaphysical concepts of the past, the present and the future, can only be reached if one thinks them as *Weltalter*, as *ages of the world*, or *aeons*, as ages or times that are each an eternity in itself, each an order of infinity, and not merely the infinite extension of the flow of now-moments. We may ask how we are even to begin to think of these aeons, these worlds of eternity, and when and how and where it is that they are, if not simply before the present and after the present, in the way that we think of next year as following the present and the year 1914 as preceding the present. As Schelling notes, the concept of different times, in this sense, is perhaps foreign to our thought. The *Ages of the World* draft of 1815 seeks to ground it thus:

‘Because different times (a concept which, like many others, has been totally lost in modern philosophy) can be at once as different ones [*können als die verschiedenen wohl zumal seyn*], to be precise, they are necessarily at once. The past time is no sublated time [*keine aufgehobene Zeit*]; the past can surely not be as a present, but as a past it can be at once with the present; the futural is surely not as a being which is now, yet as a futural being it is at once with the present, and it is equally incomprehensible to think the past-being [*das Vergangenseyn*] and the future-being [*das Zukünftigseyn*] as a

potential of Schelling’s metaphysics early on (while Marx and Engels publicly disavowed it and defended the Hegelian philosophy). (especially Frank 1988) Subsequently, thinkers like Benjamin or Bloch have demonstrated the extreme political potency of eschatological metaphysics.

complete non-Being [*als Nichtseyn*]. So it is only the contradiction in the highest potentiation which breaks eternity and posits instead of the One eternity, a series of eternities (Aeons) or times. But it is this series of eternities which generally we call time. Thus in this decision eternity discloses itself into time [*schliesst sich Ewigkeit in Zeit auf*].’ (SW VIII 302)

But how are we to think these times and eternities that are at once in the sense that they are effective powers in our reality and in our existence, that they are not distant worlds without any real meaning or connection to us? How are we to think a system of eternities that is itself our time, our real time that we live, breath, love and die in? Herein lies the crux of the matter: if we think time inside reflexion and inside noetic presentation (regardless whether in Hegelian speculative logic or in Husserlian phenomenology, or whatever other intra-reflexive program of thought) then every past and every future that we think will always again become a relative past and a relative future, relative to the present that thinks it, relative to the present of its reflexion, even if we think an absolute alterity of time, it will be one thought within the presence of thought. The only way to think a past and a future that are not reduced to a modality of the present, is to think the collapse or the cataclysm of thought – as in Schelling’s thought of the unprethinkable, or more generally, as in the rigorous operation of thought that is the ontological proof of chaos – and to find the possibility of a true past and a true future in the space opened up by this stratagem of temporary self-destruction. For if, the destruction of hyperbolic or self-enclosed reason lays bare the crisis of thought that is at once the genesis of thought and the genesis of time, then if we are able to retard the movement of genesis in our thoughts (like the secret of all art, the secret of all philosophy is the ability to retard, to slow down the infinite velocity, Schelling says in the *Initia*) we can grasp the proto-logical emergence of powers as the co-emergence of the meta-dimensions of time. Or as the first draft of the *Ages of the World* say: ‘the same levels, that in simultaneity can be viewed as the powers of being, appear in the succession as the periods of becoming and unfolding’, or also in the third draft: ‘the order of the powers behaves also as an order of times.’ (WA 25, SW VIII 310) If we are able to speculatively trace this order in thoughts, we could discern the general system of times that in turn is the only key to the actual and living determination of the cosmogonic process. The orders of eternities are the Rhodus of existential cosmology and their holographic envisioning is the leap beyond it. In the co-emergence of time and thought, the immanent differentiation and polarisation of time into the eternities of past, present and future generates zones or worlds of power that are at once the worlds of time. Paradoxically, it

is precisely this destruction of the intra-reflexive presence of past and future, and it is precisely the revelation of an absolute past (a past that has never been present) and an absolute future (a future that will never be present) in ‘the absolute contradiction in its highest potentiation’ in which the absolute unity of time becomes manifest, for unlike the past and the future of succession, the absolute past and the absolute future are *at once* with the real presence, and in this sense there is only one time, there is only the true presence of *Ekstasis* – the trans-reflexive unity of absolute past, present and future. The virtual simultaneity of A^1 , A^2 and A^3 is at once their absolute alterity. Schelling insists that it is ‘this law alone that is able to disclose the organism of times [*den Organismus der Zeiten*]’. (SW VIII 310) The simultaneity and alterity of the powers, and the ‘system of the internally or dynamically infinite, but externally finite or closed organism of times’, can hence only be envisaged and articulated – and this is the challenge of metaphysical empiricism – insofar as we do not relapse into cosmic reason and into the purely dialectical, logical and reflexive presentation. (WA 82)

As we seek to approach a thought in which thought itself is not yet formed and stabilised, but is still caught up, as it were, in the proto-logical and cosmogenetic process of its own generation, we cannot count on the deductive power of reason to disclose to us that which we may encounter. This is precisely why, in the *Ages of the World* – Schelling’s most daring inroad into the nether regions of the trans-temporal and the trans-worldly – we witness the melting away of the stability of thought and the stability of discourse. This is why, as Schelling seizes a way to grasp the absolute alterity and the virtual simultaneity of the aeons – the *Ages of the World* take on the strange mix of mythopoetic images expressing insights of considerable anthropic and existential empathy, punctuated by the most stringent logical reflexions and connected through dialectical transitions. As the introduction to all the *Ages of the World* fragments notes, the ‘forced concepts of an empty and unspirited dialectics’ cannot carry us into these regions of the extra-reflexive and the pre-logical, ‘like the poet the philosopher too has his delights’, the epiphanies and the unsolicited non-verbal insights into the currents of life, but these vital visions (there is no philosophy without them) are not enough since ‘we do not live in vision’ and ‘feeling and vision are silent’ which is to say that if we were to give ourselves entirely to them we would have to fall silent. (WA 7, INI 59) Rather, our ‘knowledge must be generated gradually, in parts and levels, which is not possible without reflexion.’ (WA 7, VIII 203) The mode of thought which can be adequate to grasp the trans-temporal reality of the worlds, can only be one that combines feeling, dialectics and

vision. As the adage by which all the fragments of the *Ages of the World* begin says: ‘the past is known, the present is cognised, the futural is intimated. The known is narrated, the cognised is presented, the intimated is presaged.’ (WA 3, WA 111, VIII 199) What this means is that the radical difference of the meta-temporal dimensions requires and brings with it a radically different mode of experience (*radically* different in the sense of rooted elsewhere, precisely rooted in a different power). Logically thinkable is only the aeon of the present, for only the present is ‘cognised’ and ‘presented’. But the other metaphysical dimensions of time cannot be grasped logically.

This is precisely why there can only be a proto-logic – any speculative logic would be condemned to the eternity of the present. But that which is logically unprethinkable and remains inaccessible to all attempts to expand logic speculatively unto it – the eternity of the past and the eternity of the future – is at least accessible to extra-logical experience and expression. This is why proto-logic must be expanded through meta-narrative. Fortunately, Schelling has given us a guide at hand for this endeavour. Following the anatomy of the psyche presented in the *Stuttgart Private Lectures* – (SW VII 465 ff.) Schelling’s rearticulation of the Platonic doctrine of the tripartite soul – we can gauge which mode of experience and expression genetically emerges with each of the trans-temporal powers.¹¹³ As we enter into our final construction of the post-critical metaphysics of existential cosmology,

¹¹³ The general division presented in the *Stuttgart Private Lectures* is that between three faculties or powers of the psyche, the first of which is the power of the A^1 as the faculty of disposition [*Gemüt*] – the unconscious aspect of the psyche that breaks up into yearning [*Sehnsucht*], desire and feeling (each power has three sub-powers, according to their relation to the unground below or the powers above and below). The second power of the psyche is the A^2 or the power of spirit [*Geist*] which is what is personal and conscious in the psyche and which is essentially will. This faculty divides into will of self [*Selbstwille*], actual will and intellect. And lastly, there is the power of soul, that is the highest in the psyche and that is the power of the A^3 (and that does not further break down into sub-powers since soul is integral). In this construction there is only genuine philosophy when the highest powers of each faculty are connected, and when there is a flow of energy through the psyche that flows through feeling, intellect and soul. To each of these faculties belongs one mode of experience, that in turn belongs to one of the proto-logical powers: immediate feeling, dialectical intellect and translogical vision – the components of philosophy, each corresponding to one meta-dimension of time: absolute past, absolute present and absolute futurity.

we will disclose each of the aeons and its corresponding mode of experience, thus finally articulating and presenting the translogical and holographic *Wissenschaft* and ἐπιστήμη of ideas, grounded on the ontological proof of chaos, which Schelling inherits to us. To begin to grasp the meaning and the function of the aeons it is necessary to get to the ‘very ground of the whole edifice of time’. (PP 85) At this very ground we find, as we already saw above, the crisis as *universio* or as καταβολή τοῦ κόσμου, the scission that posits the antagonism, through which the powers of the universe are set into tension and the chaotic wheel of nature is set into motion, and through which each and every event is a new beginning not only of time, but of *times*, of the whole system of times in its dynamic unfolding.

‘In every moment time is generated, as the whole of time, as time, in which past, present and future are dynamically separated but hence also connected. But since this relation cannot remain, as the being [*das Seyn*] is more and more overcome: so on every such posited time another time follows through which the first is posited as past: or, times emerge. The origin or beginning of time, which like the beginning of any life can not be thought without forceful differentiation and actual polar opposition, is not comprehensible in the mechanical view... The beginning that is a true beginning must not have to wait until it has passed away, it must be past right in the beginning. A beginning of time is hence unthinkable, unless at once a whole mass of is posited as past, another as future, because only in this polar separation in each moment time emerges.’ (WA 74-75)

Like the unprethinkable beginning of the primal position is a beginning that was never a present, or a beginning that is an eternal past, always posited as already past and forever past, as a ‘whole mass’ of the past, so each scission of time, each centre of time in the living and becoming time of each being, is partly always already an eternal past. This eternal past, this Αἰών of the past, is that which the being has never been, that which – in the cosmogenetic process of differentiation and polarisation – the being has excised into its eternal past. But this is not an absolute nothing or an οὐκ ὄν that also never even could be (in this case it would not be the eternal past of this being, it would simply not be at all and in no way). We know already, that the eternal past can only be a μὴ ὄν, a meontic and relative non-being like the ether of thought that is the ether of all that is not, but that Can Be, and not a non-Being simpliciter. As such, the eternal past is a meontic non-time or a time that Can Be – it is, as Schelling elaborates in the *Philosophy of Revelation*, a ‘time before the world, for itself still

non-time' and as such 'still non-time, not yet actual time but already possible time. To differentiate it from absolute eternity it can be called pre-worldly eternity.' (SW XIII 308) This pre-worldly eternity, as the eternity of all that Can Be, must be generated in each scission, each becoming-present, each event, it is the memory that weighs on the minds of the living as the memory of an infinity of lives and worlds that could have been but that do not cease to be real and do not cease to exist (in the precise sense of the abstract existence of a power) just because they have not been actualised, and it is memory of the actual past that never ceases to be a time that still Can Be different, and that is still open to be radically recast and revalorised by each scission of living time that occurs.

The persistence of this memory as eternal past, as mutable, open and indeterminate ether of what Can Be and what has never – exactly as such – been present, is the condition for the 'forceful differentiation' and the trans-temporal antagonism that is the real energy of a true present. Among the three psychic faculties or powers presented in the *Stuttgart Private Lectures*, the persistence of the Can Be of eternal past is only evident to feeling, the psychic power of the A^1 . For it is feeling that grasps the meontic ether of virtual existences that can not be known but can only be felt to accompany each situation and each reality. Feeling is this power of the eternal past but not a past that has already passed away and been mortified as dead fact, but rather this eternal past which is at once with time and which is always there as eternally past or as field of infinite potentiality (of interpretation, of permutation, of dreams). About this eternal past of the Can Be Schelling also says that it is the '*interstitium*' or '*Zwischenraum*', that is, the space-in-between, 'in the middle between absolute eternity and time' at once akin to eternity insofar as it is not actually time, but akin to time insofar as it is the 'possibility of time' and not an actual eternity. (SW XIII 305) What is it that we must surmise in this possibility of time? As we saw already in the development of the doctrine of powers, the Can Be is the ἄπειρον, or also as Schelling says, it is the 'chaotic complexus of all possibilities' (SW XI 393) where A can still be B and B can still be A – we remember in the ontological proof of chaos, we had cosmologically regrounded Kant's transcendental ideal of pure reason (the provider of the matter of experience in the choice between A and B). But like Kant's ideal of pure reason is the higher order above the ideas of reason, and it is in the last instance these ideas that are decided in the transcendental ideal of reason, here in the Can Be of the eternal past, where we find the existential-cosmological equivalent to the Kantian ideal of reason, we also encounter the eternal possibilities of everything that Can Be. Here in the A^1 of the eternal past, we find the genetic ground of the *Urbilder*, the ἰδέαι or archetypes,

that are generated as virtual realities beneath the unground of existence, each forming a possible configuration of powers, itself again open to unbounded and unlimited and hence infinite variation. Since there is in the archetypes an 'infinity of different positions of the elements against each other... the principle of the unlimited, as Plato calls it, will be the ideal presupposition of all these ideas.' (SW XI 392) But we must remember that our powers are not non-temporal and non-physical realms of pure eternal ideality. These powers are abstract existences. It is as such an abstract but real existence that we must think the generation of the archetypes. In the 1815 draft of the *Ages of the World*, Schelling says about them:

'The doctrine of these divine ideas or visions [*Gesichten*] before the beginning of the world originates in the darkest night of antiquity. As it appears, it is already mere fragment of a great doctrine from the early demised [*früh untergegangene*] true history of the world; the Greeks already know it only as tradition [*als Ueberlieferung*] and Plato too is just to be seen as interpreter of this doctrine. After the original sense had been lost early on, they were at times grasped too suprasensuously, at times as much too common. They would have been grasped much more vividly, if instead of grounding them on universal grounds of the understanding, the natural occurrence (physical process) of their generation would have been sought. The generation of such archetypes [*Urbilder*] or visions [*Gesichte*] is a necessary moment in the great unfolding of life, and even if they are not to be thought as physical substances, yet they are certainly also not to be thought without any physicality and as empty generic concepts [*Gattungsbegriff*], neither as readily present forms existing without motion as if standing still; as they are ideas exactly because they are an eternal becoming and in unceasing motion and generation. The generation of such archetypes is a necessary moment; but they neither vanish after this moment, nor do they remain, but the moment itself eternally remains, because each following one holds fast to the previous one or comprises it; and thus these archetypes still spring forth from the innermost of creative nature as fresh and vividly as before time.' (SW VIII 290)

The 'physical process' of their 'natural occurrence' is given to us in the scission, the position of antagonism and the rotary process of the powers. In this process, it is the role of the Can Be of the eternal past to produce, through its boundless and infinite movement, an 'infinite multiplicity [*unendliche Mannichfaltigkeit*] of possible positions of the powers against each other' and to try and attempt all the positions such that 'the multiplicity of the possible world

passes by like images' at infinite velocity. (Pa 488) The idea is nothing but a configuration of powers, and in the Can Be this configuration is itself still indeterminate and potential, it is not yet a figure but only the space of figures-to-come, or a space of dreams.¹¹⁴ These pre-figurative 'visions of creation', these nascent dreams of the absolute in the process of life, are not yet actualised, they have not been decided, thus everything in them is undecided, like the images of a dream they are strangely peaceful even where they envision scenes of war and death, and like the images of a dream they can be at the same time perfectly lucid and absolutely incoherent and inconsistent. The *Ages of the World* describes the generation of these archetypes in the universal life process also as a pure playfulness in which the powers of nature are shuffled and thrown about effortlessly and without deliberate intent, 'because like a child is to be called selfless, when although in the earliest time all inner forces arouse each

¹¹⁴ Along this line of thought, in the *Presentation of the Natural Process* of 1843, Schelling defines space as the 'phantasma of a subject' or also the 'ghost of a subject', that is, the subjectless ground which is only the possibility of a subject, and which must cede or 'give space' so that a subject can actualise itself. (SW X 322) Similarly, Schelling speaks, in the *Philosophy of Mythology* of a topology of the intelligible that determines the most essential possibility of a thing in relation to all other things (or through the spatial network of ideal relations), the structure of which however is itself determined by time. 'As we said, in the intelligible world, every being [*jedes Wesen*] has a space afforded to it by necessity, but it is not space, that determines its position, but time. That intelligible space is an organism of times, and this internal, thoroughly organic time is the true time; the external one, which emerges thereby that a thing is outside of its true where and not at the position on which it can stay, has been rightly called the emulator for the true one (*aemula aeternitas*), namely of that organism of times that can only be thought as eternity. Because it alone leads everything to its position and its appropriate place.' (SW X 429) Next to the rearticulation of the Platonic doctrine of time as copy of eternity (*Tim.* 37d) which in Schelling is only true if eternity is understood as the living and creative time and time is understood as the mechanical series of succession, we find here also the common post-idealist grounding of metaphysical space on a more primal organism of living time (Bergson, Heidegger, etc.) – perhaps today, a contemporary metaphysics is urged by the immense power of the network in cybernetic reality to radically reevaluate the decision for the primacy of time (a decision first manifested philosophically in the *Ages of the World*) or to supplement the philosophy of time with a philosophy of the territories or zones of the world. The founding elements of such a supplementation have already been produced by Deleuze and Guattari.

other in natural effect and tender interplay, but no will, no character, no cohesive and controlling One has set in yet' the ether of eternal possibility of the Can Be is such a playful and selfless process of creation and 'hence that creation or generation of images is merely play or lust.' (SW VIII 297) But this playful generation of the ideas, without hold or solidity or consistency is also like a kind of madness, as in a wild and uncontrolled stream of images all virtual realities that could ever be, pass through the meontic ether of the eternal past.

'Not for nothing, the ancients spoke of a divine and holy madness... not for nothing the chariot of Dionysus is pulled by panthers or tigers; because it was this wild delirium of infatuation [*dieser Taumel der Begeisterung*] in which nature falls in the envisioning of essence, and which the oldest nature sermons of foreboding peoples worshipped in the drunken feasts of bacchii orgies. That mad self-circling wheel of primal nature and its fertile forces, were here represented through entranced frantic dances accompanied by the blustering sound of a raw and disruptive music... the greatest confirmation of this description is, that this madness tearing itself apart is still today the innermost of all things, and only controlled and, as it were, spoken to mildly by the light of a higher intellect, it becomes the real [*die eigentliche*] force of nature and of all its generations.'" (SW VIII 338)

Like in every creative person there must be madness – only controlled by will and intellect – for otherwise, without any trace of madness there could only be an 'uncreative and infertile' spirit, in the cosmogenetic process of universal life, there needs to be a past abyss of playful madness too, for it is here that, without boundary and limitation, all that could be is envisaged. (ibid) In the chaotic wheel of nature that is the rotary process of the powers, the A¹ is the pure generation of essences or whatnesses without thatness. It is this chaotic abyss of generation in the Can Be that Schelling refers to already in the *Philosophy of Art* 1804 when he says that the 'fundamental intuition [*Grundanschauung*] of chaos resides in the fundamental intuition of the absolute'.¹¹⁵ (SW V 466) But the ideas can not remain visions of

¹¹⁵ While Kant conceives the experience of the sublime as a limit of epistemological stability foreboding the imminent collapse of the transcendental apparatus, the young Schelling grasps the intuition of chaos in the experience of the sublime as intuition of the generative ground of essences, or of the state in which essences are in the state of 'identity of absolute form and absolute formlessness' since 'every chaos in the absolute is not merely negation of form but formlessness in the highest and absolute form, just as conversely highest and absolute form in

eternal possibility forever. 'Like the times of innocence do not persist, like the games of childhood, in which the future life is prefigured [*sich vorbildet*], thus that blessed divine dream could not last. All merely beginning [*keimliche*] life is in itself full of yearning [*Sehnsucht*] and demands to be elevated from mute effectless unity into expressed effective one.' (WA 167) For the undecided possibility of the dream in the eternal past to pass from mute effectlessness into expressed effectivity, as we already know, the decision Must Be posited, and thus in every eventual scission that is an immanent generation of the orders of eternity as the universal organism of times, the second eternity of the present is the Must Be that forces a decision everywhere where there could be an A or a B in the Can Be. This whole aeon of the eternal present is only the perpetual return to the antagonism, as in the rotary cosmogenetic process the wheel of chaos turns, the differentiation through real opposition, the polarity of expansion and contraction, of rage and love, is enforced again and again in the perpetual becoming of all that is.

The second eternity, that is posited in the act of the scission, is hence the 'time of battle', and the Αἰών of decision, the age present in all mythological consciousness as a great clash of the gods and the divine powers. (SW VII 206) Among the three psychic faculties presented in the *Stuttgart Private Lectures*, this time of the eternal present is hence the time of the dialectic experience, the time of opposition. In the journey of the ideas through the universal life process, it is the age in which the virtual images must be decided so that they become coherent and consistent and shed the abundance of their being in the Can Be. To be decided, the ideas must acquire a thatness where there was previously only a whatness. Since the being of each thing is itself simply the composition or constellation of the powers within it, to decide for a specific position, is to decide the being of the thing. There is no difference or gap

formlessness: absolute form, because in each form all and in all each is imprinted [*gebildet*], formlessness, because in this unity of all forms none is specifically distinct', adding that 'the understanding passes to all cognition of the absolute, be it in art or in science, through intuition of the chaos.' (SW V 466) Hence we see that even before articulating the ontological proof of chaos (which needs to go through Hegel's superior proof) Schelling already valorises chaos as positive ground – as the ether of all that Can Be, appearing in the dialogue *Bruno* of 1802 as – whereas Kant takes it as negative limit. There is a similar valorisation of chaos in the Jena Romantics such as the Schlegels or Novalis, coinciding with the resurgence of Spinozism ('Germany's secret religion') which allows a speculative view of living nature as self-generating out of chaos or infinite potential.

here between the idea and the thing that it is. Strictly, we can hence not say that there is a μέθεξις or that the thing partakes in anything (at best we can say that everything partakes in the cosmogonic process). It is itself nothing but this composition of powers that is also its idea. The confusion of ancient metaphysics and of ancient Platonism in this regard rests on the fact that 'the simple point that the actual things can not distinguish themselves from the archetypes [*von den Urbildern*] through the what, thus merely through the that, and hence the elements of things can be no other than the elements of the ideas, was not clear to the thinking of that time.' (SW XI 392)

But there is yet another difference between the doctrine of ideas of ancient Platonism and that of Schelling's existential cosmology. In the *Sophistes* Plato introduces, in response to the damning criticism levelled at the doctrine of ideas by the *Parmenides* (according to which the simple doctrine of ideas, as paradigmatically presented in *Phaedo* would be prone to self-contradiction) the necessity of thinking the reality of the μὴ ὄν in the being of the ideas conceived as relational matrix in which they can be part being and part-non being. (*Sop.* 246a-251e) We can say that Schelling's modern reactivation of the meontic in philosophy follows this solution of the late Platonic philosophy. However, in the *Sophistes*, the introduction of the meontic into the being of the ideas serves in fact as a possibility to distinguish between the being of the φαντάσματα and the being of the εἶδωλον, or of the bad copies and the good copies of the archetypes, in Schelling's existential cosmological construction of the doctrine of ideas we note that *all* ideas begin their life, so to speak, as meontic non-beings. This is also why the cosmology of ideas of the *Ages of the World* and, generally of the Schellingian existential metaphysics, knows of *Urbilder* (archetypes) but not of *Trugbilder* (simulacra). Since every idea begins its life as the wild, incoherent dream of a mad nature in the abyss of eternal possibilities, *every* image has something false about it.¹¹⁶ Thus we must give up the

¹¹⁶ However, Schelling does introduce, especially in *Bruno* of 1802, the *Würzburg System* of 1804 and *Philosophy and Religion* of 1804, the concept of the *Gegenbild* or counter-image – presumably inspired by the Biblical ἀντί τύπος and particularly its Gnostic interpretation – but the *Gegenbild* is not a *Trugbild*, it is not a false pretender, on the contrary it is the real projection of the *Urbild* into existence and as such the only way that the archetype can become objective. But if the projections that make up the stuff of the universal life process are no less real or dignified than the original ideas, the distinction itself becomes futile, which is precisely why Schelling drops the concept of the *Gegenbild* and speaks, in the works of the mature existential cosmology, only of ideas (visions or *Gesichte*) that stream through the

conception of ancient Platonism, firstly according to which the things are different in dignity and power from the ideas they partake in, and secondly that there is a distinction in kind between the false and true images – it is not the whatness of the idea that changes in its flight from Can Be into the Must Be but its thatness, it is decided, or rather it decides itself and thus acquires a solidity and coherence that it lacked before. We must not think this thatness simply as materialisation. That would mean to misunderstand the cosmogonic process. As we have seen, the purest thatness is not matter (the υποκείμενον of the process or the B that is submitted to the higher A^2) but the pure processuality of the decision or the event (the X). Thus Schelling insists the thatness is as much immaterial as material (all materiality and immateriality, like subjectness and objectness is transitive, everything that is matter for something is immaterial for another, everything that is immaterial is material for another, everything apart from absolute freedom that can only be thought as pure but hence also unattainable immateriality) – just like the pure thatness of a human being is ‘bones, flesh and everything else that the material human consists of’ but is also something else, namely pure ‘actus or decision’ and it is the latter which is ‘by its nature eternal’. (SW XI 405) We see that in the cosmogenetic process, that we are here reconstructing as the immanent genesis of the organism of times, the Must Be of the present aeon is the perpetual decision of the idea such that it becomes an actus. Once again, we must remember that the actus of the idea is not outside the thing in which it acts, it *is* the thing, since the thing is nothing but the constellation of powers that makes up its singular decision or position.

‘Only thus can we understand the immanent creativity of the idea [*das immanente Schaffen der Idee*] which is not outside the organic being, but in itself, not with consciousness and deliberation, but merely driven by its nature, that want to bring about that which is proper for it as far as the power of contingency allows, and to protect the generated against this. It is the idea which replaces the organ that the snail, or another animal of the same level, has lost, it is the idea, which in the higher standing animal

powers of being. We note that the Schellingian doctrine of ideas is in some ways very similar to the Deleuzian one, whether there are only simulacra or only archetypes, once an ontological distinction between false and true images is dropped, the universe is seen as cinematographic flux of images that distinguish themselves immanently through their power and their intensity, transcending the things that they are only insofar as the transcendence is purely immanent, generated as the vectors of eternity that emerge in the trans-temporal polarisation of the scission.

brings about the most intense motions in order to save it when its life is threatened through internal causes.’ (SW XI 426)

Every decision must have a virtuality or a potentiality that it can decide (for instance, a decision cannot be between events that are not compossible) and this virtuality, stretching from the eternal past of possibilities into the present of decision, is given in and through the idea and what above we have called its dreamlike space of possibility or its intelligible topology prescribing the possibilities of concrete life in each thing. As the idea enacts the transition from the infinite but concretely bounded possibility of the Can Be to the determination and limitation of the Must Be, the idea acts as the trans-temporal bond between the aeons of eternity, as connector and catalyst in the immanent genesis of temporal transcendence – like the idea is the bond of the reduplication, the Platonic δεσμὸς, that we apprehended above as the connector of antagonistic powers in an entity, it is also the active and generative bond between the aeons. Therefore it can be said that ‘no creation of any being happens to this day, without the repeated generation of its archetype [*seines Urbildes*]’ and even that ‘every generation in nature is only a return of that moment in the past, which for one moment [*für einen Augenblick*] is granted to step into the current time as an alien appearance’. (WA 164) In the organism of time that makes up the living and creative time, there is a constant flow of energy connecting the aeons in the same movement in which they are separated and differentiated. In this movement it is the idea that splits itself and thus repeatedly generates itself, developing within the infinite but yet bounded logical or rather topological space of its possibilities. The idea affords the transient stability of each being by placing a bond on the antagonistic forces of expansion and contraction that would otherwise implode or explode the being. In each scission or moment of generation this bond is momentarily lifted in order to allow for the influx of the virtual power of the eternal past of the Can Be into the present. In this sense the eternal past does not pass, it does not cease to be eternal past always at once and together with all present. Yet the interaction of the times in the organism of times is not linear or uni-directional. Like the possibility of the eternal past flows into the moment of the present, the forceful differentiation and antagonistic polarisation of the scission also demands a decision against the eternal past, against that which Can Be. This is why, although every creation is an influx of an eternal past into the present, at the same time every genuine initiation of movement or novelty also has the form of a radical rejection of the past. For Schelling this reality accounts for the necessity of pain in all life:

‘It is a futile attempt to try and explain out of peaceful conjoining of different forces, the multiplicity of nature. Everything that is can only become in sorrow and like fear [*Angst*] is the basic mood of every living being, so it is also that everything that lives has only been received and born in harsh conflict... are not all products of nature evidently children of fear, terror and desperation? And as we see in the singular case, in which, as it were, we can be witnesses of an original creation, that the first foundation of the future human is only in lethal conflict, terrible sorrow and desperate anxiety... if this now happens in the singular and the little, should it be different in the large and the generations of the first parts of the universe?’ (SW VIII 323)

In this painful birth of everything novel, something is excised into the eternal past. It is that which should not be and which could have been if this new birth had not been. It is the wailing complaint of unborn children, un-lived romances and unrealised dreams. Yet, painful as the rejection of the past is, without it there is no true present, and no true future, as this passage from the *Ages of the World* forcefully insists:

‘How few are those who know true past! Without forceful present, created through scission from the self, there is none. The man who can not oppose himself to his past, has none, or rather he never leaves it, perpetually dwells in it. Also those, who always wish back the past, who do not want to pass on, while all else is passing on, and those who impotently praise past times and feebly scorn the present, merely prove that they cannot become effective in this latter. Only the human being, who has the force to elevate himself beyond himself, is able to create a true past; only this one also enjoys a true present, as only this one looks forward into a true future. (*eine eigentliche Zukunft*)’ (WA I 11)

We begin to see now that the immanent genesis of the aeons of the cosmos is something close to us, something existential. It is not the coming-to-be of vast spheres far beyond our lives and our imaginations, it is the trans-temporal scission that occurs in every genuine event and that connects every singularity, from the most humble organism or even the sub-atomic fluctuation up to the generation of stars or the demise of civilisations on distant planets, all as elements of the one universal life process. In the existential crisis, in the position of the self against one’s past, in the turning towards a futurity beyond oneself and the experience of the pure intensity of the present, it is possible to live the *Mitwissenschaft*, the complicit knowledge in the

cosmogonic process. We can forego the decision for the self and forsake the knowledge of the universal process, yet a decision must be, and not to decide just means to be decided by another. That there must be a decision is ensured by the constant return of the A^2 , the engine of the cosmogonic process. Of this necessity of decision Schelling says in the *Philosophy of Revelation*: ‘this is demanded by the highest law of all being, which wants that nothing remains untried, everything is open, clear and decided. This law is in this sense above God, that it is the law which sets God free against his unprethinkable being.’ (Pa 462) We must understand this strong proposition to mean that once the primal or blind contingency of the unprethinkable beginning has posited the world, the rotary process is initiated and the internal tension of the powers (reversed into tension in the unum versum) necessitate the perpetual decision. This is the highest law of being, nothing but the cosmogenetic process itself – and since it is the decision through which the posited B can be excised again, it is also through the incessant return to the decision in the $A\tilde{\omega}\nu$ of battle, that the purity of the $A=A$ can be reached and God can be ‘set free against his unprethinkable being’ or rather, the excision of the blindly-existing and the blind-being B can be accomplished and the true God, the coming God of universal justice, can appear as the absolute freedom of all reality.

Hence in each scission that determines the time of every being, the final purpose, the *causa finalis*, of the scission is the apocalyptic eternity of the post-worldly time, the $A\tilde{\omega}\nu$ of the Shall Be, the eternity of an absolute futurity. Schelling generally refers to this age as *das Johannäische Weltalter*, the aeon of John of Patmos, of the visionary – by some ecclesiastic authorities rather considered apocryphal and insane – Book of Revelation. Philosophy, insofar as it essentially consists of the insight into the cosmogonic process, sees by necessity all things from the standpoint of redemption, or from the standpoint of the aeon that Shall Be, as that which they could be if they were pure freedom. The mode of experience of the Shall Be is hence vision, not the sensuous vision of the eyes but the vision of the epiphany or of the higher imagination. The vision of the Shall Be is that which in each temporal scission gives the becoming of the idea a futural purpose, not as that which is already pre-determined to be, but as an immanent telos of freedom, as that freedom which each being can always envisage to be, thus already transforming its present state and setting itself free against its past. If the eternal past is the infinite and indeterminate possibility of what Can Be, the eternal future of what Shall Be is the most determinate and concrete being and yet it is as infinite as the Can Be, while only what Must Be of the present is finite and bounded. Since the A^3 of what Shall Be comprises both the infinity of the A^1 and the boundedness of the A^2 , the future is ‘the

organising principle of these periods' and it is 'that which contains time as a whole', (WA 82) for in the future – not the future of a time that will come as time passes, but the future that will never become a present and that is still of the greatest power and effect in the time of the present – the decision of the time of battle and the potential of the time of dreams are reconciled in a time of love.

In the constant battle between A and B in the return of the A^2 the indeterminacy of the A^1 is left behind and the determination and the egoity of being emerge, but only in the overcoming of this egoity towards the new openness of the A^3 – no longer that of indeterminacy but now that of freedom from all battle and strife – can there be purpose and a reason in the higher sense to the universal life process. This is why in the intrinsically utopian perspective of existential cosmology, 'the whole of time is the future' for the metaphysical dimension of the future alone is that for the sake of which everything is and which prescribes the immanent telos of each scission of time as a Shall Be of universal freedom, which in line with the Platonic tradition, Schelling conceives of as a Shall Be of love (of cosmic love, of love as the cosmic bond that integrates all reality, returning to Plato's *Symposium* and to the mystical conception of universal love as path to freedom in Boehme and others). (WA 82) The purpose of the cosmogonic process, perpetually relived in each existence, and in history as a whole, is that there Shall Be love, and that the battles of the present shall give way to the eternal peace of the perfectly decided infinity.¹¹⁷ As the final purpose of the cosmogonic process, the Shall

¹¹⁷ The political intent of this philosophy of time is pretty much the same as that of Kant, who in his political and historical writings, such as the Idea to a *Universal History in Cosmopolitan Intention* of 1784 or *On the Eternal Peace* of 1795 develops the conception of an eschatological horizon to history as possibility of an immanent transcendence of the time of the world towards a radical beyond – as which also Kant presents the concept of the true eternity in *On the End of All Things* of 1794 once again returning to his designation of this beyond as 'Abgrund' or abyss of reason (AA VIII 335). But as in the conception of chaos, what remains in Kant merely negative limit or horizon of thought, is in Schelling posited as reality of thought in the same move in which the ontological proof of chaos transforms the Kantian limit concept of the chaos into a productive and self-grounding operation. But apart from the general eschatological orientation of his philosophy, Schelling offers very rare and sparse outlooks on political consequences of his thought. It is however not true that this silence covers up an apolitical or intrinsically conservative outlook. As Schelling's shifting position itself proves, it is possible to draw different consequences from an eschatological

Be is the *causa finalis* of the ideas, the horizon of finality that spirit explores and in which spirit envisions the ideas in highest freedom and in highest determination, a state in which the idea is no longer in the infinite possibility and indecision of the Can Be nor in the one-sided determinations of the Must Be, but in the highest form of decision that is at once a suggestive infinity.¹¹⁸ In order to make this highest form of being the actively liberating principle of times within the self, and in order to live a creative and productive life, it is necessary to live for love, for the active liberation of reality towards what Shall Be – not to live for the future in the sense of living in constant anticipation of something to come (this would mean to live for the future of succession and for the tomorrow, this would mean utter unfreedom) but to live for the absolute future that is always at once with the present and that, as vision of unconditional freedom, accompanies each truly lived moment as unreached but yet effectively intimated horizon.

‘All that still lives in indecision and insofar as it still lives in it, lives in the past. To the one who resists the scission in himself, time appears as sinister and rigid necessity. But for those who, in constant self-overcoming, do not strive for that which is behind them but that which ahead of them, its power becomes imperceptible. Love enters into the future, because only for love the past is given up. Yearning hangs on to the past, it is longing for the first being-one and lack of active love. Lust is in the present, both are disturbed by time, only to love time is a friend.’ (WA 84-85)

philosophy of time. Thus in the *Stuttgart Private Lectures* of 1810 Schelling argues that the state, as constitutively incapable of fulfilling its aspiration to provide a spiritual haven for humanity, must vanish or be reduced to its absolute minimum so that freedom can set in, (SW VII 461 ff.) whereas thirty years later, in the Berlin lectures Schelling takes a much more conservative position and argues that the state can not be altered and that the freedom of the individual lies only in the anticipation of God in the private contemplation of art and religion. (SW XI 534 – 572)

¹¹⁸ Hence the highest expression and presentation of the idea is in symbolic form – as developed in the important § 39 of the *Philosophy of Art* of 1804 – for as opposed to the allegorical (purely imagistic) and the schematic (purely conceptual) form, only the symbolic form of the *Sinnbild* can carry at once the determinateness and the suggestive infinity of the Shall Be. This is another reason why the highest presentation of ideas must take the form of an aesthetic meta-narrative and cannot remain in conceptual (schematic) dialectics.

However, we remember that the cosmogonic process – as a process constituted by dissonance, grounded on unground, emergent on crisis – is perpetually and constitutively threatened by disturbance and collapse (the B outside the parentheses in the world-formula). Herein lies the ever-present danger – ever-present, in the sense of present in each scission of the presence – of that what Shall Not Be, to manifest. Herein lies also the danger of the final collapse of the fragile stability of reality and the return of all things into eternal past, and what in the third fragment of the *Ages of the World*, Schelling calls the danger of ‘universal convulsion and dissolution of all things into chaos’ (SW VIII 329) a danger that, in the first draft, Schelling describes as ‘a terror like the one whereby the human realises that his peaceful dwelling is built on the furnace of an ancient fire’ – the chaos, the perturbed rotary process, the mad wheel of nature – and that ‘the same principle which carries and holds us in its ineffectivity, in its effectivity would devour and destroy us.’ (WA 13) Since the world is a process grounded on contingency, since all necessity in it is ultimately grounded on contingency, there is no final necessity for the Shall Be to emerge, for love to succeed and for universal freedom to reign. This is precisely why the aeon of the present is the age of decision, where the Must Be battles over the Can Be and the Shall Be. And it is from this perspective of the undecidedness of the cosmogonic process (which is a theogonic process in the sense that it ends with the coming of God) that a superior history and a superior historicity can be thought. Superior history –developed by Schelling as a philosophy of the ‘supra-historical’ [*übergeschichtlich*] – (SW XII 153) is the perspective of a history of aeons, of the eternities of time as active powers in the process of life, entering a kind of radical historicity into philosophy for which the historicity of Hegel’s developmental absolute is not nearly historical enough. In this superior history of existential cosmology, the immanent finality of the cosmos, the fully unfolded coming to be of the ὄντος ὄν, is at stake in each existence, its final demand can be articulated as what we can call the cosmological imperative: to always act in such a way as to envisage the cosmos, the futurity of salvation and integral unity of all reality.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ What we call the cosmological imperative here is articulated in the *Stuttgart Private Lectures* as the injunction to ‘let the soul act in you’ or to ‘act according to the soul’ – Schelling’s highest ethical principle which along the Schellingian ontology of the psyche means to act always with view to the third power, the power of the A^3 or of vision and futurity, or again put differently, to act with the redemption of all existence in view, even more succinctly: to act guided by universal love. (SW VII 473) Schelling also says that of this principle ‘Kant only had the formal expression’ whereby the difference between the

In lieu of Conclusion

Schelling's offerings to philosophy are enigmatic, at times cryptic, but always profound. They demand not to be taken as already finished and polished, but to be deciphered, translated, creatively interpreted and put to action in our own thoughts and in our own reality. Consisting of a long and protracted series of attempts, new beginnings and fragments, they exemplify the essential nature of philosophy as a striving and rebeginning – not a monolithic and monological body of knowledge, but an open process towards truth. What is true of Schelling's oeuvre is more generally true of the project of existential cosmology which is by necessity a perpetual *work-in-progress*, developing, growing and unfolding as new angles of philosophical investigation are opened, new vectors of thought engendered and new spheres of reality encountered. The commitment to metaphysical empiricism prohibits any kind of systematic closure, be it of form or of content. Thus there have been many projects of thought in modern and contemporary philosophy which can be fruitfully read as expansions and intensifications of existential cosmology. To just name a few, the work of thinkers like Bergson, Whitehead or Deleuze can be seen as deepening and intensifying the post-critical metaphysics of superior or metaphysical empiricism. Meanwhile, the psychological studies of Jung, the psychosocial investigations of Benjamin, Whitehead's erudite speculative interpretation of post-Einsteinian physics, the far-reaching kaleidoscology of Deleuze and Guattari, or the aesthetic studies of Alliez, can be seen as variously enriching and expanding the content of existential cosmology, adding to Schelling's own cosmological archaeology of art and mythology.¹²⁰ What we have argued here is that these diverse projects find a powerful

categorical and the cosmological imperative is precisely revealed as congruent with Kant's formal or hypothetical conception of God as the abyss of reason and Schelling's ontological proof of chaos in which the absolute past of God is demonstrated as an unprethinkable chaos and the futural truth of God is posited (in the cosmological imperative) as the universal demand of what Shall Be. (ibid)

¹²⁰ Here, we have not entered deeply into the Schellingian studies of art and mythology as we have been chiefly concerned with the question of metaphysical foundations. An appropriate treatment of these studies – intended mainly as corroboration of the metaphysical foundation of the powers through immersion into their factual unfolding in history, in turn producing a material basis for the articulation of the New Mythology of existential cosmology – would

ally and a further grounding in the Schellingian foundation of post-critical metaphysics, which through its thorough and immanent engagement with Kant and Hegel – still up to today the towering figures of modern thought – stands at the very centre of the contemporary problematic of thought.

What Schelling, and the other thinkers along the broadly post-Schellingian line of thought, offer through their various articulations and enactments of superior empiricism, is a path of thought that leads beyond the dead end of modern reason. Caught on the one hand between the debilitating self-limitation of post- and neo-Kantian criticism for which all questions of ultimate sense and value remain matters of subjective conviction, and on the other between the Hegelian hypertrophic and autistic reason which seeks to deduce all existence out of its own ether and can not acknowledge even the possibility of a horizon of meaning beyond itself, modern reason finds itself locked in an aporetic of its own making and gives way to a generalised nihilism (the European Nihilism which is now rapidly becoming a Planetary Nihilism).¹²¹ Far from acceding to a regression into anti-modern irrationalism and its unmitigated affirmation of the glory and the violence of great founding myths (we can think of Klages and Spengler as main thinkers of this regressive irrationalism) what superior empiricism offers is a way beyond the aporetic of modern reason that proceeds through the interrogation of the extrarational genesis of reason in the powers of nature and the uncovering of the suprarational horizon of sense in the emergent symbolic stratum of reality, not in order to abandon reason but in order to integrate and preserve it in a truly *translogical* mode of thought which is thus also an eminently *transmodern* mode of thought. It is from this vantage point that the Romantic project of the New Mythology, or of what Schelling calls the ‘universal symbolics’ (SW V 370) unfolds its full critical and creative potential and emerges as the still open and ongoing collective project of the transcendence and integration of modern reason into the integral cosmosophy of the universally symbolic dimensions of cosmic existence. Yet while the ancient cosmologies present the grand vision of a perfectly formed

require a further treatment of similar length and detail as the reconstruction of post-critical metaphysics presented here.

¹²¹ It should be noted that the postmodern deconstruction of modern reason has not alleviated but exacerbated the time-historical condition of generalised nihilism, generally tilting the balance further in the direction of a neo- and post-Kantian subjectivism of sense values, which in any case amounts to a real impoverishment of meaning even if presented in the charade-like guise of Nietzschean sovereign legislation.

spherical reality, hierarchically ordered and already complete and closed, the transmodern existential cosmology must be radically rearticulated based on the facticity and contingency of existence and the radically open and unpredictable unfolding of the whole.¹²²

Thus a marked advantage of thinking the foundation of contemporary metaphysics with and after Schelling is the fact that, as developed throughout our study, Schelling shows a sensitivity to the (typically existentialist) themes of the thrownness and ungroundedness of existence, the radical temporality of all life and knowledge, and the prevalence of death in all life, which is perhaps unrivalled amongst metaphysical empiricist thinkers. Thus it is possible to think with Schelling – far from the attempted appropriation as ‘sublated’ forerunner of twentieth century existentialism by Jaspers and Heidegger – an existentialism which does not encapsulate itself in the phenomenological life-world of the anthropic but is radically open to the powers of the cosmos and the forces of nature. If Heidegger offers an existential ontology which – despite its various reopenings – always remains at the very core an enclosure in post-metaphysical existential phenomenology, then Schelling provides the means to think a veritable existential cosmology in which the thrownness of existence does not stand as a hindrance to the speculative thought of a vibrant and alive universe.¹²³ The immensity of the

¹²² The story of the rise and fall of the great enanthropic spherical cosmologies (which is at once the story of the rise and dissolution of classical civilisation) has been told authoritatively by Peter Sloterdijk in his *Sphären* trilogy. (Sloterdijk, 2004) However, if Sloterdijk’s grand narrative peters out in the universal condition of microcosmic and inter-anthropic foams – alarmingly mirroring and effectively cosmologising the state of generalised social fragmentation in postmodern or biopolitical capitalism – the (post-)Schellingian line of thought is marked by a conviction in the possibility of the immanent transcendence of this state towards a global, planetary, or macrocosmic integration.

¹²³ Once again, for the authoritative destruction of the whole of the post-Heideggerian and post-phenomenological field of thought through the stringent critique of its inherent limits, see Alliez *De l’impossibilité de la phénoménologie*. (Alliez 1995) It is interesting that the late Heidegger presents – perhaps under the influence of Eugen Fink’s cosmological critique of *Being and Time* – a thought that seems to approximate a cosmology, most poignantly in the division of the world into the fourfold (*das Geviert*) of the celestial, the terrestrial, the divine and the anthropic. Although the proper reception of Heidegger’s late thought has hardly taken place (with key works of the cycle only published throughout the last decade and yet untranslated) the foundational *Beiträge zur Philosophie – Vom Ereignis* (translated as *On*

stars above and the conviction of existential vocation, lauded by Kant at the end of the *Critique of Practical Reason* as the certainties which stabilise philosophy and the philosophical life as worthy pursuits, (AA V 161 ff.) are immanently conjoined in existential cosmology in the event or decision of a concomitant world- and self-construction through which each and every existence acquires an immediately cosmic significance. What we have above called the cosmological imperative is thus the injunction to construct oneself as a being inextricably embedded in the becoming of the universe and tied to the fate of a larger reality, transcending the solipsism of the modern individual towards a praxis of transpersonal transformation and recasting existence as meaningful journey towards universal liberation. Schelling himself had great hopes about the prospects of a New Mythology (the ‘mythology of reason’ of the *Oldest System Program of German Idealism*), grounded on the open and further development of existential cosmology and constructed as an assemblage of diverse and polyvocal contributions (‘for mythology is not the matter of an individual’ but ‘only of a generation that is taken in the grip of and inspired by an artistic drive’ [*eines Geschlechts, das von einem Kunstrieb ergriffen und beseelt ist*], SW VI 572) synergetically interweaving in a non-totalising but yet cohering meta-narrative. Only in such an emergent vision, a new transmodern horizon of sense could be established. As the Würzburg *System of the Whole of Philosophy* proclaims, until now ‘only partial mythologies are possible, which are made out of the stuff of the times, like in Dante, Shakespeare, Cervantes Goethe, but no universal and generally symbolic one.’ (SW VI 572) Only if the creation of a universal symbolics proceeded, integrating the aesthetic and scientific experience of nature, the experience of history and existence, and the diverse mythological and spiritual perspectives of the terrestrial traditions, into a new – planetary and transmodern – meta-narrative, could a New Earth and ‘the re-becoming-one of humanity’ [*das Wiedereinswerden der Menschheit*] become real. (ibid)

Enowning, Heidegger 2003) already sufficiently demonstrates that Heidegger’s Turn and the Other Beginning of thought do not entail a reopening towards the extra-phenomenological productivity of nature as would be required of a trans-anthropocentric cosmology. In this regard it remains true that Whitehead’s cosmological scheme of *Process and Reality*, published in 1928 (the same year as *Being and Time*), is the key text of counter-Heideggerian contemporary ontology. (Whitehead 1979)

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