

THE MOVEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY: FREEDOM AS ECSTATIC THINKING IN
SCHELLING AND HEIDEGGER

by

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The question of freedom has been a present and constant concern since the inception of the occidental philosophical tradition. Yet after a certain point the manner in which this question is to be asked has been canonized and sedimented: do humans (subject) have the capacity (predicate) for free and spontaneous action?

The third antinomy of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, I argue, demonstrates the necessary failure, the perpetual *aporia*, of continuing to discuss whether humans conceived of as subjects possess the predicate freedom. I argue that if we do not want to fall either into the Third Antinomy, we must steer away from thinking of freedom as a predicate of a subject and reconfigure it as an experience or a comportment.

Following suggestions from Jean-Luc Nancy's *The Inoperative Community*, *Being Singular Plural*, and *The Experience of Freedom*, my dissertation argues that re-thinking of freedom as an experience simultaneously requires a re-thinking of identity, in terms of ecstasy, ek-stases, or ex-position, and accordingly a re-thinking of the activity of thinking itself. Nancy cites

Schelling and Heidegger as *the* thinkers who have made an attempt to think about ecstasy seriously as a fundamental ontological fact about the constitution of things.

This reconfiguration of the constitution of things as either parts of organic structures (Schelling) or beings in a world (Heidegger), demands that we recognize how our identities are perpetually being constituted in all of our acts of relating with the world. We are constituted and constituting by our engagement with the things that environ us, and this enviroing is active and alive. If this is accepted as an ontological fact, this requires that we reconsider what it would mean to think, as all of our engagements with the world would be creative—both of ourselves and of what it is that we encounter. This would also mean that the meaningfulness of all things is wildly contingent, in fact necessarily, so. Accordingly, I defend that freedom, as the experience of possibility through our awareness of this contingency due to the lack of an origin, emerges for us in the experience of thinking.

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CHAPTER I

A SORT OF INTRODUCTION

If there is a sense of reality, and no one will doubt that it has its justification for existing, then there must also be something we can call a sense of possibility. Whoever has it does not say, for instance: Here this or that has happened, will happen, must happen; but he invents: Here this or that might, could, or ought to happen. If he is told that something is the way it is, he will think: Well, it could probably just as well be otherwise. So the sense of possibility could be defined outright as the ability to conceive of everything there might be just as well, and to attach no more importance to what is than to what is not. The consequences of so creative a disposition can be remarkable, and may, regrettably, often make what people admire seem wrong, and what is taboo permissible, or, also, make both a matter of indifference. Such possibilists are said to inhabit a more delicate medium, a hazy medium of mist, fantasy, daydreams, and the subjunctive mood. Children who show this tendency are dealt with firmly and warned that such persons are cranks, dreamers, weaklings, know-it-alls, or troublemakers.

Robert Musil
The Man Without Qualities, Vol. 1

The objective of this dissertation, stated in short, is to establish what a manner of philosophizing would look like that brings the sense of possibility that Musil describes above to the forefront of philosophical activity. In his *Tarrying With the Negative*, Zizek argues that, “philosophy begins the moment we do not simply accept what exists as given (‘It’s like that!’, ‘Law is Law!’, etc.), but raise the question of how is what we encounter as actual also possible” (Zizek, 1993: 2).¹ Following Zizek, my contention is that this pursuit of the

¹ The majority of the citations in this dissertation are made in accordance with the Chicago Manual of Style, though there are a few notable exceptions. All of my citations of Schelling (with the exception of texts that have not made the collected works yet) are made according to the pagination of his collected works in German. All of my citations from Heidegger, insofar as possible, are made according to the number and page of the *Gesamtausgabe* edition in question—see the appendix. I have also followed standard citation conventions regarding references to Stephanus numbers in Greek texts, to book, proposition, etc. in Spinoza’s *Ethics*, and to

conditions of possibility of any set of actual circumstances should, or rather, must always be undergirded and guided by a sense that what is actual could be otherwise than it is. Thus I share one of Charles Scott's hypotheses from his *The Lives of Things*. He writes:

My hypothesis is that when people are predisposed to experience events and are relieved of a quest for definitive origins that explain why something occurs and that define its meaning from the beginning, they are more able to pay attention to the often astonishing happenings around them, happenings that never quite fit their duplications in meanings and values. In that sensibility, "nature" [or as I will say, "essence"—AA] fades in its unifying traditional powers, and we begin to find alternative manners of differential expression and recognition before the occurrences of our lives that happen physically and indifferently to the meanings by which we recognize them. (Scott, 2002: 45)

By the end of this project I will reformulate and implicitly disagree with certain aspects of Scott's assertion, particularly the idea that occurrences of our lives are fundamentally indifferent to us; yet for now, his provocative assertion that ceasing to seek out fundamental, interpretive principles can free us up to cultivate a different kind of sensibility, or bearing, towards experience will serve as a guide—one that I will elaborate as we proceed.

As is indicated by the title of this project, I believe that such a redetermination of the act of philosophizing requires that we rethink our understandings of three central terms (even if central only in their exorbitancy from that center, particularly in the standard way in which ecstasy is understood) from the history of philosophy: 1) freedom, 2) ecstasy, and 3) thinking. To that end, my task in this introduction to the body of my dissertation is to quickly delineate—potentially, all-too-quickly—some standard ways in which these terms have been understood so as to show how traditional concepts of freedom lead to philosophical conundrums that can only be overcome via a certain understanding of ecstasy.

references to the original German pagination of the A and B edition of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Hegel is cited according to the Suhrkamp edition *Werke*; Nietzsche according to the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*.

Yet the understanding of ecstasy for which I will advocate here is not a non-discursive ecstasy that amounts to the self-immolation of a human subject into some divine beyond—as it would seem to be in Plotinus and the Pseudo-Dionysius—but rather a sense of ecstasy that could just as well be termed a dialogical ontology, an ontology of reciprocal determination, which is thereby no *onto*-logy at all, but rather an account of the spacing(s) and deferrals that makes identity both possible and actual. It is from this restructured conception of ecstasy that maintains the identity of that which is ecstatic, that we will have to rethink what it means to think. Put simply, thinking for me is not the tarrying of a subject with an object from which it is of an entirely different kind and thus it is neither representational in the anti-realist sense of the term, nor does it grasp prefabricated, meaningful wholes. Rather, thinking is, in accord with the very dialogical structure of things, an always-creative conversation between myself and the other things of the world in which I find myself.

The brief explanations just given regarding the ways in which I will employ the terms freedom, ecstasy, and thinking are all-too-cursory. Accordingly, permit me, first, to go into greater depth in an attempt to elaborate on these terms' histories in attempt to argumentatively vindicate the manner in which I will use them in this project. After having discussed these key terms, I will then give a brief methodology regarding the presentation of my project in hopes of making the case that I, at least in part, practice what I preach by enacting the kind of thinking I advocate for in the very unfolding of my project. I then give a brief account of these terms' function in terms of Heidegger's understanding of *Stimmung*, and finally, I will provide sketch of the chapters that are to follow.

Section I The History of the Concept of Freedom

Stating a widely held view in the history of philosophy, Aquinas holds that free choice can only be said to exist in those that “have within themselves the principle of their motion or operation” (Aquinas, 1965: 121). For Aquinas, humans can be said to have free choice insofar as they have reason, as “the root of all liberty ... is found in reason. Hence, according as something is related to reason, it is related to free choice” (Aquinas, 1965: 124). For this reason he concludes that freedom cannot be a question of character or habit, but rather free choice is a potency, “the power of will or reason” (Aquinas, 1965: 128). Here freedom has already been made into a capacity which we possess, and which we exhibit in our making judgments about things. For Aquinas, we can go wrong—and thus have the capacity for evil—because our knowledge is always discursive and thereby mediated.

In making freedom a capacity or faculty that we have, we thus run into the traditional problem that such a conception of freedom leads to: are we free to choose what we like, or are all of our actions determined, or pre-destined, by God or the mechanistic movements of the natural order of things? Aquinas, of course, following Boethius spends a great deal of time attempting to reconcile the possibility, nay, necessity of human freedom with divine providence. Writing in the wake of (or rather mid-stream in) this dispute, Erasmus writes: “By free choice in this place we mean a power of the human will by which a man can apply himself to the things which lead to eternal salvation, or turn away from them” (Rupp, 1969: 47). Erasmus, echoing Aquinas, asserts that humanity was not only endowed with reason, but also with will. This will is that which can lead to either good or evil. Our propensities towards evil and sin are “vestiges of original sin” which crop up in all

descendants of Adam (Rupp, 1969: 49). The necessity of the possession of this will for Erasmus is that it enables us to explain the possibility, and accompanying rationality, of God's judgment. He writes, "If the power to distinguish good and evil and the will of God had been hidden from men, it could not be imputed to them if they made the wrong choice" (Rupp, 1969: 50). If humanity were not imbued with such freedom, a god who hands out punishment would be an entirely incomprehensible and irrational deity, and as Boethius says in responding to Philosophy, "the author of all good must be made responsible for all human vice since the entire order of human events depends on providence and nothing on man's intention." In his response to Philosophy's assertion that providence and freedom can be reconciled, Boethius continues drawing conclusions that would hold *if* humans do not have the faculty of freedom: "there is no use in hoping or praying for anything, for what is the point in hope or prayer when everything that man desires is determined by an unalterable process" (Boethius, 1962: 107)?

The positions Erasmus and Boethius put forward are exemplary of an extremely common understanding of freedom throughout the entire history of philosophy. Though the punishment may not be being doled out by God, the fact that we hold one another responsible is seen as a primary argument for the necessity of assuming the freedom of the human. Given the fact that we engage the world via what he terms "evaluative concepts," Isaiah Berlin writes, "To say that you might as well morally blame a table as an ignorant barbarian or an incurable addict is not an ethical proposition, but one which emphasizes the conceptual truth that this kind of praise and blame makes sense only among persons capable of free choice." Thus looking back to Erasmus, the basic position is the following: if we do not want to consider God to be unreasonable, and potentially mad, we must assume that the

fact that he holds people accountable testifies to *his* knowledge of the human as being capable of doing otherwise—as it seems like the creator of the universe would be on top of that sort of thing. Berlin goes on, “This is what Kant appeals to; it is this fact that puzzled the early Stoics;² before them freedom of choice seems to have been taken for granted; it is presupposed equally in Aristotle’s discussion of voluntary and involuntary acts and in the thinking of unphilosophical persons of the day” (Berlin, 2002: 16).

The evidence for freedom of choice thus lies in the fact that we do hold people accountable for actions. However, this viewpoint fundamentally conflicts with the basic scientific understanding of modern philosophy. We hold people responsible for things, but if we are actually rational creatures, we understand that to do so is a contradiction in terms. It is in Kant’s transition from the First to the Second *Critique* that we can experience this contradiction in terms most radically. Thus we must consider how Kant, the great resurrector of causation and the thinker of duty and responsibility, can be one person.

Even though Hume was thought to have destroyed the possibility of us thinking of causation as anything more than constant conjunction without necessary connection (Hume, 1993: 51), Kant rehabilitates cause by turning to the categories of the understanding and the status of time as the pure form of apriori internal intuition. The very fact that we are able to assemble the sensible manifold of experience into a coherent order at all demonstrates that even someone like Hume had to grant the necessity of the time as a condition for the possibility of experience. Bernard Freytag writes:

² One could consider Lucretius to be an example of this, as even if he is not historically called a member of the Stoa, his thinking certainly exhibits stoic residue. In Book Two of *On the Nature of Things*, he wonders how “if every motion is always linked/and a new one always arises from an old one in sure succession” something can break this chain of causation. His conclusion—without getting into his argument regarding the clinamen, or the swerve that lies at the origin of things—is free will: “For doubtless one’s own will provides for each a beginning/of these things, and from it motions streams through the limbs” (Lucretius, 2003: 37-38).

The key to Kant's argument is that in order for Hume to claim that only "constant conjunction plus belief" could withstand philosophical scrutiny, Hume *had to presuppose* a necessary, law-bound time order in order to discern constant conjunctions at all. Thus, Hume tacitly presupposed the transcendental-logical pure concept of causality in order to be able to offer his skeptical arguments. (Freydberg, 2005: 10)

Freydberg illuminates that Hume's skepticism was an epistemological skepticism, not an actual argument that instants of causal connection do not occur. Rather it is the case that we cannot actually know these connections or make them intelligible. Kant's retort is to say that since we experience constant conjunction, and since we experience time, we do know, and always already have made these connections intelligible—at the very least in an isolated moment of occurrence—through the category of causality. Elaborating this point more fully, Adorno writes, "whereas Hume would say that causality is merely *subjective*, Kant would reply, indeed, it is merely subjective, but this supposedly subjective element is the necessary precondition without which *objectivity* cannot come into being" (Adorno, 2001: 91). It is thus the Copernican turn itself that enables us to account for causation and to have a kind of knowing about it—if all of our experience is necessarily determined by the pure form of intuition, which is time, we know that causal connection reconceived of as the condition of experiencing the sequentiality of things in time, is an object of knowledge. Kant explains, "That all that occurs has a cause cannot at all be concluded from the concept of what occurs as such; moreover, the fundamental principle shows, rather, how we can arrive at a determinate concept of experience of what occurs in the first place" (Kant, 1998: A301/B357). The nail has been driven home on a certain aspect of Hume's critique, but at what price?

Causality has thus been resurrected. To be determined is to follow something. This must be taken quite literally. It is not necessarily the case that something must ‘follow out’ of something else to be considered caused or determined. All that must be the case we experience time and the category of causality thereby comes along as part of a package deal. And here begins the bite. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant famously defines freedom as “the unconditioned causality of the cause in appearance” (Kant, 1998: A419/B447). Freedom as the unconditioned causality of a cause means that in order for something to be free it must be a cause which has nothing prior to it, nothing which determines it in being the cause that it is, it must be absolute spontaneity. Kant himself elucidates the most serious problem with this conception of freedom in relationship to thinking human freedom when he writes, “everything in a sequence of events stands under rules to the point that nothing ever happens without being preceded by something that it always follows” (Kant, 1998: A113). In instantiating a rule of nature, Kant shows that insofar as things are perceived, to use Spinoza’s language, *sub specie durationis*, they are necessarily determined. As humans, and accordingly, as necessarily finite beings whose inner sense is fundamentally determined by time—though of course, time is nothing without the subject (Kant, 1998: A35/B51)—it seems impossible that we should ever be able to think ourselves as free.

Nevertheless, Kant obviously plays a central role in the history of the thinking of freedom. Freedom reasserts itself in the *Critique of Pure Reason* as a transcendental idea. Kant defines the transcendental idea as follows: “A concept from notions that exceed the possibility of experience is an *idea*, or a concept of reason” (Kant, 1998: A320/B377). This means that freedom is something that reason can take as an object, but which cannot be experienced and brought under a concept by the understanding. John Sallis explains, while

still using Kant's other name for transcendental ideas—concepts of reason—that these concepts or ideas are intended to bring us away from the realm of the conditioned, wherein the concepts we encounter always apply to objects of experience (which by definition—as we shall see—are always conditioned by virtue of the fact that they participate in the phenomenal realm) back towards the unconditioned. Concepts of reason, “extend beyond anything that could be given” and hence they cannot be generated via an observation of the sensible manifold nor can they ever be applied to the objects of the sensible manifold (Sallis, 1980: 55). The difficulty here is that while transcendental ideas are naturally occurring via inference, if we misapply them and take their subjective necessity—which we shall have to return to in moment—to be objective existence, and in turn think that we can apply them to the sensible manifold, we are led to the problem of the antinomies. To make the aforementioned mistake is to fall into the trap of transcendental illusion, which is what the entire Transcendental Dialectic of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is dedicated to simultaneously acknowledging and avoiding.

Let us now take a look at these subjective necessities and their relation to objective existences, as they appear in the latter half of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In the introduction to the Transcendental Dialectic, Kant is already presaging the turn to the *Critique of Practical Reason* when he explains that the task in struggling with this opposition is “to level and make solid the ground for those majestic moral structures, in which can be found all kinds of mole burrows that were left by reason grabbing vainly, but quite confidently, for treasures, and that make the building insecure” (Kant, 1998: A319/B376). Those mole burrows that shake the stability of the ground of metaphysics and the moral philosophy to follow are created by people who attempt to present the existence of freedom as a phenomenal fact—so what

exactly does Kant have in mind with the reconfiguration of freedom as a transcendental idea?³ He wants us to get beyond the point of asking about the reality of freedom as an object of existence, as has already been said, but he also wants to acknowledge that our possession of freedom is a live issue for us. Freedom as a transcendental idea has no corollary in our realm of experience and it cannot have an experiential corollary in nature, as “there is a universal law of the very possibility of all experience that all that occurs must have a cause” (Kant, 1998: A533/B561). Nevertheless, insofar as we are led to think of things in terms of their beginnings, we are forced to create the idea of spontaneity. It is this idea, with no object, that “is the basis of the practical concept of freedom...*Freedom in the practical meaning* of the term is the independence of intention from coercion by impulses of sensibility” (Kant, 1998: A534/B562).

For Kant, we need a practical concept of freedom in order to be able to say that something else than what happened ought to have occurred. Kant thus makes a famous, yet not unprecedented move⁴ in an attempt to resurrect freedom in the way in which he has already resurrected causation. If the problem of freedom is the problem of time, and

³ The irony here, as pointed out by John Sallis, is that the occurrence of transcendental illusion that causes these problems are generated by the same Reason that in the beginning of the first *Critique* is to do the same mole-tunneling but that time for the purpose of securing the ground of any future of metaphysics. Sallis writes, “the fissure of critical reason is now unmistakable: in its opening move toward restoring the ground it cannot but plant itself on that very ground—that is, the bedrock to which it would tunnel down is identical with the ground that that bedrock would support and make firm, the ground tunneled out by the history of metaphysics” (Sallis, 1987: 16)

⁴ I say that this is not unprecedented due to the Fourth and Fifth books of Spinoza’s *Ethics*, wherein freedom is resurrected via the turn towards the reconfiguration of the subject as part and parcel of the manifestation of substance. Here the time sequentiality which defines reason, the second kind of knowing, for Spinoza is undermined as the *ben kai pan* is asserted. Within time, there is only bondage, *sub specie aeternitas*, freedom emerges in an entirely reconfigured manner. Kant is not quite this radical, as he wants to preserve the subject as apart from the rest of the world in a very real way, and here, I think, he follows in line with the traditional parsing out of body and soul—the latter of which, by not belonging to the realm of appearances, stays outside of time, and thus remains free. Here, there is a close connection between Kant, and a stoic like Epictetus in his *Enchiridion*, and Boethius in the *Consolations*.

phenomenal appearances is the realm of time determinations, what about the mysterious noumenal realm which is not bound by the apriori forms of intuition, precisely because we do not and cannot perceive it? Kant asserts that certain effects thus “can be thus be seen as free with regard to its intelligible cause, and yet with regard to appearances be considered simultaneously as a consequence according to the necessity of nature” (Kant, 1995: A537/B565). To save the freedom of the human Kant must posit a simultaneously empirical and intelligible, a simultaneously phenomenal and noumenal subject. The noumenal aspect of this subject though cannot be something which *acts*, as if that were the case then the action would have to be something which occurred in time effecting other things occurring in time and we are back to our initial problem. Rather, the noumenal aspect of the subject is the subject’s character, out which actions follow by necessity, but which on its own terms has nothing preceding it as it exceeds the bounds of temporal determinations.

Kant believes he is able to demonstrate that we think about ourselves, and must think about ourselves in two ways. First, we are able to take ourselves as objects of thought, this reduplication that is apperception—which we must always remember cannot be experienced and brought under a concept, much like the transcendental ideas—is demonstration of the fact that we are simultaneously phenomenal and noumenal. Apperception serves as the unconditioned grounding function, hence Sallis writes, “It is *original*: It is not dependent on sensibility, receptivity, and so is (again) prior to the empirical order” (Sallis, 1980: 69). The fact that it is unconditioned and grounding means that it is fundamentally inaccessible empirically and cannot be brought under a concept, otherwise it would it become phenomenal and hence no longer be unconditioned. Yet we still have access to it, as the ‘I think’ *can* accompany all of our presentations—it is just a different kind

of access. Second, and this point has already been made, we hold each other responsible for our deeds regardless of what we think may have proceeded them or caused them. We would be mad in much the same way that God would have to be mad in holding people responsible for things that he had predetermined if we held people who were not capable of doing otherwise responsible for their deeds.

This problem is only entrenched further in Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* wherein the definition of freedom offered in the *Critique of Pure Reason* still holds. Here, he writes, "if one wants to attribute freedom to a being whose existence is determined in time, its existence, including its actions, cannot be extricated from the law of natural necessity of all events in its existence, including also its actions" (Kant, 2003: 129). Given the aforementioned desire to hold people accountable for the things that they do, Kant believes that we must be able to instantiate freedom, since our desire to hold people accountable hinges upon this. Not only do we hold others accountable for their actions, but we also experience guilt for things which we have done in the past. Though we may try to convince ourselves that we were fully determined in our actions that things transpired by way of natural necessity and that we are innocent, we cannot get away from the "the marvelous faculty in us called conscience." Kant explains that no matter how much we pitch ourselves a story about how necessitated and determined we were with regards to past actions, an individual "cannot bring the accuser in him to silence when he is conscious that at the time when he committed the wrong he was in his sense, i.e., his freedom was employed" (Kant, 2003: 133).

In the second *Critique*, Kant then turns and points out yet again that we believe that there is an atemporal, i.e., noumenal dimension to the human which is where the free causal

ground for all of our otherwise determinate action lies, that we must accept on the basis on rational faith. We thus make a return to a notion of character which is determinate for who we are. Thus an evil person, who has been evil and vicious since they were a little child is held responsible not for individual actions, per se, but rather for the “freely assumed evil and unchangeable principles” which serve as the grounds for all of their actions and maxims. These principles which we somehow or other assume, adopt, or choose outside of all time assert themselves in our individual acts, and accordingly we can see to the core of the person in question via their acts. Hence what is being indicted, is not, as I have said, the particular action, but rather, the principle which grounds that action and all other actions which the person in question undertakes.

This thematic is made even more explicit, and simultaneously radicalized, in Kant’s *Religion Within the Limits of Mere Reason*, where this question of character, or in Kant’s language, the question of the adoption of a ground which then determines which maxims we select, is most explicitly engaged. Here, he writes, “Thus, when we say: man is by nature good, or, man is by nature evil, this only means as much as that there is in him a first ground (inscrutable to us) of the adoption of good maxims or of evil (antinomian [*gesetzwidriger*]) maxims” (Kant, 1995: 31). We see the same question being raised here as that which was brought up in the second *Critique*, however, in this case, the question is displaced from the language of the critical project and thus appears outside of the phenomenal-noumenal distinction—and this seems to be a crucial moment, one which could potentially be taken as an acknowledgement of the failure of attempting to reconcile the conflict of practical freedom and natural necessity. The moment of freedom, of *true* freedom as that which has not cause prior to itself is that by which we adopt our disposition or “the first [*erst*]

subjective ground of the adoption of maxims” (Kant, 1995: 36). I say that this is the moment of true freedom because it is not a choice which selects from a list of possible options, but is rather the seemingly arbitrary inaugurating moment of the human. This is explained by Alenka Zupancic as Kant’s solution to the problem of freedom. She writes, “Kant’s solution to this problem is that one has to recognize the propensity to evil in the very subjective ground of freedom. The ground itself has to be considered an act of freedom. In this inaugural act, I can choose myself as evil” (Zupancic, 2000: 88). A ‘choice’ by definition is never truly free given the Kantian definition—this is a claim we will return to in full in Chapter V—as this implies that there is a decision to be made between two or more things which necessarily precede the act. If this were the case, and we had not inclinations, we would end up a deadlock comparable to that of the famous example of Buridan’s ass, incapable of choosing between the two equidistant haystacks. Thus there is no choice between options that are weighed, but rather an act, which precedes all possibilities of choice—and it is for this act that we hold people responsible.

Another reason why this is the only tenable account of freedom for Kant in the *Religion* text is precisely the same reason that Fichte posits the priority of the *Tathandlung* in the *Wissenschaftslehre* (Fichte, 1982: 97). The problem with speaking about a primary character without speaking about an act which founds it is that such a character presents itself as a fact. Any fact, a *Tatsache*, at least for Fichte and presumably for Kant as well, seems to necessitate an anterior activity which caused or posited that fact. Thus if we want true freedom, i.e., true spontaneity we need to look prior to this fact (*Tatsache*) of character and find the act (*Tathandlung*) which posited it. Hence Jean Grondin explains, “If one wants to be truly rigorous in philosophy, it is necessary to genetically deduce all facts from an

original activity, that is from a *Tatbestand*. A deed and not a fact must thus play the role of an original principle in philosophy” (Grondin, 1995: 207). Kant himself saw the necessity of this, and the movement to an unconscious, originary act of self-determination is the evidence of this in the *Religion* text.

Kant reinforces the notion of the act outside of all time that founds our character in his investigation of evil. Here, he explains that if we want to account for the evil acts of an individual by tracing them back in time, i.e. their beginning in time, we end up in a regress as lengthy as the span of our lives until we reach the point of having to posit “the propensity of evil (as a natural ground)”—Kant calls such propensity innate (Kant, 1995: 57). But the freedom of this positing outside of all time is a strange way of thinking freedom, especially insofar as the motivation for the inquiry in the first place was to find the space wherein we can predicate freedom of the human. Here we end up telling people that they are good and evil based upon a decision that they made outside of all time—they freely chose their character, though they do not know it, and that is what they are responsible for. Their deeds are like tree branches which bring us back to the trunk and eventually the roots—and it is these roots, buried deep under ground that we want to investigate and, in turn, judge. This is an issue to which I believe Schelling (mirroring Aristotle) offers an interesting answer, which we shall see in Chapter VI.

Now at this point one must make a decision, a decision which I have already made in beginning to write this dissertation. If, like me, and quite obviously like Heidegger (and I will argue like Schelling as well—though this may be a tendentious claim in some reader’s eyes) you find this final solution rather unsatisfactory we ought to consider what the unspoken assumptions that led to this conclusion and contradiction was in the first place. I

claim that the problem with Kant's account of freedom and the reason that he ends up having to go through such treacherous—and brilliant—machinations to save freedom, which we may want to argue he does not do in the end in a compelling manner, is precisely because of the way in which he conceives of freedom, and in turn the very paradigm of explanation. For Kant, just like Aquinas, from the beginning, freedom is the predicate of the subject. The question of freedom is thus, to reiterate: does the human being possess the predicate 'free', which means, does the human have the ability to act spontaneously? What Kant has demonstrated for all philosophers who will follow in his wake is exactly what must happen to us if we are to attempt to think of freedom as the predicate of a subject acting in a world that is somehow foreign and other to it. We will end up saying, "well, things precede us, and insofar as we are beings who take on habits and inclinations, if someone were to view my life *sub specie aeternitatis*, they would be able to predict every decision that I will make when presented with a choice. But, I feel guilty when I do bad things, and I want to hold people accountable for the rotten things that they do, so how do I put these two thoughts together?" In the end, I believe that Kant went as far as anyone ever will on this question insofar as we interpret freedom as a predicate of a subject. If we do not want to fall either into the Third Antinomy or into the opposition of the phenomenal and noumenal realm or into the distinction between pure and practical reason, we must rethink freedom all together—scrapping its status as a predicate of a subject, and as I will go on to argue, reconfiguring it as an experience.

Yet this is not the whole story. Kant's difficulties in articulating a coherent view regarding freedom are in large part due to the ontological commitments his thinking necessarily assumes, that is the static distinction between subject and object. The solution to

this, as I have suggested, is to move beyond this distinction and to focus in upon conception of how things hold together that privileges a certain conception of ecstasy. As Beiser explains, “The dilemma of knowledge versus faith,” and accordingly the idea that freedom can only be preserved in a supernatural, mental realm that we must accept via rational faith as a regulative condition of morality, “tacitly presupposes that mechanism is only the form of explanation or knowledge” (Beiser, 1987: 128). Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie*, for example, overcomes the mechanical physics of Descartes and Newton. It supplants mechanistic, linear causality as the univocal form of explanation for, as Beiser says, “the organic theory [that] explained a phenomenon in holistic terms by seeing all events as part of a wider whole” (Beiser, 2003: 83).

One of the tasks of this project is thus to show how this conception of the organic and the ecstatic relate to one another so as to force us to reconfigure our sense of explanation. We will require a new sense of explanation, of interaction, that will in turn require a new way of thinking about freedom. Yet, prior to articulating what this sense of ecstasy is—a task that is continually taken up and repeated throughout the course of the body of my dissertation—I will lay out some of the predominant interpretations of ecstasy as it relates to human experience as this theme crops up in the history of philosophy.

Section II **History’s Ecstasies**

While it would certainly be a foolhardy endeavor to attempt to present a total history of the manner(s) in which ecstasy has been conceived of in the history of philosophy—as these manners are certainly more multifarious and multivalent than the account I am about to give would lead one to believe—I believe that some of the basic tendencies of interpreting

ecstasy can be sketched out with some succinctness. In general, I think it is fair to say that ecstasy, as a phenomenon worthy of conceptualization, would be taken to belong to the domain of theology—or at the very least a psychology of religion. Even after having composed an extensive tract that deals in large part with re-thinking ecstasy, when I hear the word I most often think of Bernini's *Ecstasy of St. Teresa*; so following William James—and it is from his *Varieties of Religious Experience* that I am quoting this text—let us turn St. Teresa's own words in describing this ecstasy—the kind of ecstasy that I am attempting to differentiate my project from; she says:

In the orison of union the soul is fully awake as regards God, but wholly asleep as regards things of this world and in respect of herself. During the short time the union lasts, she is as it were deprived of every feeling, and even if she would, she could not think of any single thing. Thus she needs employ no artifice in order to arrest the use of her understanding: it remains so stricken with inactivity that she neither knows what she loves, nor in what manner she loves, nor what she wills. In short she is utterly dead to the things of the world and lives solely in God. (James, 1999: 445).

James refers to such a state as “ecstasies” of the kind that describe and potentially define mysticism (James, 1999: 450). What is crucial to note about St. Teresa's description of her ecstasies is that they are marked, as James explains, by an extreme passivity—passivity so extreme that it is hard to even articulate how the one who is ecstatic is even still present as one who could say ‘I’. The description of such a state could certainly take numerous forms, but of primary concern to us is that this extreme passivity—in some way or another; requiring no artifice as St. Teresa says (though others will disagree with her)—leads to a breakdown of the distinction between the self and God. Assuming that the God into which one loses oneself has a kind of permanence and incorruptible character, the moment of ecstasy would have to be precisely a loss of self into some whole greater than the self. James

explains, “this overcoming of all the usual barriers between the individual and the Absolute is the great mystic achievement. In mystic states we both become one with the Absolute and we become aware of our oneness” (James, 1999: 457).

Philosophical discourse, however, often has a hard time taking such claims seriously as a kind of knowledge because of their emphasis upon immediate—and thereby incommunicable—knowledge. Accordingly, labeling a philosopher as a mystic—and thus a thinker who privileges ecstasy—has historically served as an indictment of certain thinkers projects as non-philosophical. For example, in the “Art-Religion” section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel explains that “the mystical is not concealment of a mystery, or unknowing, but rather what it consists in is that the self knows itself to be one with the essence, and this is thus revealed. Only the self is revealed to itself, or what is revealed is so only in the immediate certainty of its revelation.” (Hegel, 1988: 471). Yet, as we know from the beginnings of Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, immediate self-revelation in and as itself is no knowledge at all; as no knowledge is available to us in strict and simple immediacy—insofar as the movement from sense certainty to perception is a negation of simple immediacy as such. Our knowing always requires mediation, insofar as mediation is an attribute of language, and without naming something, it cannot be known. Hegel explains, “what is called the inexpressible is nothing other than the untrue, the irrational, the merely opined” (Hegel, 1988: 78). My task in laying out a short history of thinkers for whom ecstasy played a central role is to enquire to what extent their understanding of the mystical, or of ecstasy, in fact leads to a kind of knowledge that portends to immediacy, and thereby, to a lack of discursivity, as I hope to show by the end of this project that both Heidegger and Schelling understand ecstasy in a way that displaces the question of the immediate and is thoroughly

discursive. Ecstasy gets reconfigured in Schelling's later writings, particularly in his *Erlanger Lectures*, showing, contra Kenneth R. Westphal, that while Schelling stays committed to a "non-conceptual account of knowledge," this does not mean that he maintains a "nondiscursive" account as well (Westphal, 2000: 285).

Prior to Heidegger and Schelling, there is a rich legacy of thinkers in the history of Western philosophy whose philosophical endeavors culminate in a desire to unify oneself with God—or that which is *epekeina tes ousias*, as I think it is fair to say that most of the thinkers I will mention are attempting to interpret Socrates' statement from book VII of the *Republic* regarding the status of the good (Plato, 1993: 509b/189)—through self-effacement in the face of the absolute. Though there are certainly numerous instances of mystical tendencies prior to him, Philo presents some of the more starkly presented passages regarding ecstasy and knowledge. For him, insofar as the task of philosophy—or theology, the distinction is of no matter to him—is to know God, we must realize that we cannot attain this knowledge in the full and robust sense in which it is possessed by the prophets of the Old Testament so long as our reason continues to be at work. He explains, "For what reasoning is in us, the sun is in the world, for both are bearers of light, one sending forth to the whole world a sensible light, the other bestowing on ourselves the intelligible rays of apprehension." Insofar as our reasoning is how we illuminate the world to ourselves, epistemically speaking, it also serves as the ground of our identity; he continues, "as long as the mind still casts its light all about us, pouring as it were a noonday radiance into the entire soul, we are self-contained, not possessed. But when it comes to its setting, naturally ecstasy and divine possession and madness fall on us. For when the divine light shines, the human light sets" (Philo, 1981: 154). At this moment of inspiration, ecstasy, or possession, it is

impossible for the self to still be present; the immediacy of the divine is too much, as the mortal and the immortal cannot both be present at once. There is a kind of incommunicability to this immediacy of experience that renders it necessary for prophets to speak in allegory so as to communicate the truths of divinity to us in language. Accordingly, even if a thinker like Philo thinks prophets are able to communicate some taste of the divine, it is always a *mimesis*—to that end, it may be expressible, but not as it is in itself: it requires a veiling.

It is interesting to note, that in the case of Philo—as is probably the case in many other, similar authors—this account of the divine and human light serves to show the limits of human knowledge. As Hadot suggests, Philo “speaks of the ‘limits of knowledge,’ and advises human beings to know themselves instead of imagining that they know the origin of the world” (Hadot, 2006: 139). This would be to say, speaking for Philo, that humans should not seek to become prophets through the forceful application of the human intellect; such a vocation can only be dispensed to humans by God. It is for this reason, amongst others that are too complex and off-topic to go into here, that Hegel explains that after skepticism has eradicated the possibility of our finding criteria for knowing in the material world, the next step is try to find this objective criteria elsewhere, in its permanence. This is spirit (*Geist*). “The affirmative result of skeptical philosophy” for Hegel is that “everything else except spirit is merely finite and dissolving” (*Werke* 19, 414). Accordingly, for a thinker like Philo, “the main issue is *to know God*.” But this knowing, as has been said is problematic as given the manner in which Philo describes divinity, “God can only be intuited through the eye of the soul, through the *horasis*. He calls this rapture, ecstasy (*Verzückung*), God’s influence” (*Werke* 19, 421). But given God’s nature, to reiterate, as “nothing other than

being; accordingly the soul cannot know what he is but rather only that he is, i.e., precisely only as being” (*Werke* 19, 422). Philo’s description of the prophetic state, the closest we can come to God, is a potentially even more extreme formulation of the ecstasy as described by St. Teresa. The subject is not only passively present, but is actually extinguished—at least on a cognitive level.

Plotinus takes up this question in a slightly different way, as, in a sense, he thinks that while we may not be able to intellectually arrive at union with the One, we can cultivate a certain kind of ethical comportment that would facilitate our arriving at this union. Plotinus is explicit that our coming to know the one cannot take place under the force of our own will—rather, like St. Teresa, he privileges the need for “simplifying and giving oneself over.” Plotinus is plain: the intention of the end of the *Enneads* is “not to disclose to the uninitiated; since that Good is not disclosable, it prohibits the declaration of the divine to another who has not also himself had the good fortune to see” (Plotinus, 1988: VII/341). He goes on to explain that one who has ‘seen’ it, does not really see it, as in this moment of seeing, seer and seen are united into one. Yet in this unification, the one who sees is eradicated, as it were, to the extent that “he himself was not there...he was carried away or possessed by a god, in a quiet solitude and a state of calm... having become a kind of rest.” All of this language is for Plotinus—as it was for Philo—insufficient in a certain way. Plotinus makes it quite plain—at least on the level of the presentation of his text—that he can, or better, must give an image of this unification. He focuses on the image—he says these are mere *mimemata*—of the unification of a person with the One as an entrance into a sanctuary, having left behind the statues of the outer shrine (which in this case stand in for the ideas *qua* the highest available objects of contemplation). Plotinus says that this is only possible through

something other than the standard philosophical manner of contemplating, *theama*, and says, “But that other, perhaps, was not a contemplation but another kind of seeing (*to de isos en ou theama, alla allos tropos tou idein*), a being outside of oneself (*ekstasis*) and simplifying and giving oneself over and pressing towards contact and rest and a sustained thought leading to adaptation, if one is going to contemplate what is in the sanctuary” (Plotinus, 1988: VII/343). Two things of note present themselves regarding these thoughts in relation to the project I am undertaking here: first, just as in the case of Philo before him, and St. Teresa afterwards, this state of *ekstasis* is one in which the integrity of the subject is decimated, only to be given back to them after they leave the sanctuary. Second, even the translator of this text, A.H. Armstrong, goes to lengths in a footnote regarding this passage to critique anyone who would want to translate *ekstasis* here as ecstasy. He explains, “there is no good reason for describing the mystical union according to Plotinus as an ‘ecstasy.’ It gives a very misleading impression of this austere and quiet mysticism.” This is telling; while mysticism in itself may be philosophically suspect; it can be salvageable on a theological level so long as it is not ecstatic revelry. I take this as an insight into a fairly standard attitude—avoidance—to taking up ecstasy as a philosophical theme.

Hegel presages Armstrong’s concern when it comes to describing Plotinus’ employment of the language of ecstasy. He explains, “Partially in these names, that he also calls ecstasy (*Ekstase*), and partially in the matter itself, the ground is found to call Plotinus a fanatic (*Schwärmer*).” While for Hegel there is not sufficient ground to call Plotinus a *Schwärmer*, he does offer an insightful explanation of what this would mean for him. He explains:

Since this name brings to mind nothing other than the condition which we call that into which the crazy Indians, Brahmans, monks and nuns displace (*versetzen*) themselves so as to bring themselves into pure withdrawal into themselves, seeking to efface all representations and seeing of reality; this is, in part, to be a constant condition, but in part in this fixed vision into emptiness, where there would now appear as light or as darkness, there is to be no movement, no distinction, and, as such, no thought. (*Werke* 19, 443)

While, in Hegel's eyes, Plotinus does not fall into this absolute *Schwärmerei*, he does share with Philo the contention that God is absolute being and is, as such, unknowable. "All predicates as such, for example, being, substance, do not accord with it; since they express some kind of determinateness. It does not sense itself, does not think itself, it is not conscious of itself; since in all of these lies a distinction" (*Werke* 19, 447). Distinction means separability, separability means placement, placement means corporeality, and corporeality leads to the possibility of decay—accordingly, nothing of this sort can be attributed to God *qua* the One. Yet for Hegel, as has already been said, this implies that God cannot be thought—and thus the state of ecstasy in which one comes to some kind of knowledge of God is one that is pointedly non-philosophical.⁵

⁵ I would also like to mention another thinker from the medieval era who trades heavily in the language of ecstasy—maybe the most heavily of any thinker who was taken so seriously for so long—Dionysius the Areopagite, or the Pseudo-Dionysius. The Pseudo-Dionysius encourages his readers, in *The Mystical Theology*, to pass on to the "naked truth" of the super-essential Good or One by taking the "plunge into the Darkness where truly dwells, as saith the Scripture, that One Which is beyond all things" (Dionysius, 1977: 193). It is only by doing so, by-passing all kinds of human ratiocination, that one can enable oneself to encounter,

His incomprehensible presence...it breaks forth, even from the things that are beheld and from those that behold them, and plunges the true initiate unto the Darkness of Unknowing wherein he renounces all apprehensions of his understanding and is enwrapped in that which is wholly intangible and invisible, belonging wholly to Him that is beyond all things and to none else (whether himself or another), and being through the passive stillness of all his reasoning powers united by his highest faculty to Him that is wholly Unknowable, of whom thus by a rejection of all knowledge he possesses a knowledge that exceeds his understanding. (Dionysius, 1977: 194).

With the Pseudo-Dionysius, we see the same rejection of the idea that one could attain any kind of full and robust knowledge of God through normal human concepts. Rather, we must first give up all of our standard modes of understanding so as to unite ourselves with that which is unknowable as such. The Pseudo-Dionysius' account of this union, however, is notably more subtle—while certainly not being more

While I would hope that I have made my reasons clear for discussing these thinkers—and there are many others who I could have focused in that I have excluded, including Scotus Eriugena, Nicholas of Cusa, and Giordano Bruno, all of whom I cite if for no other reason than that Schelling seems to think highly of them—permit me to reiterate with Hegel’s assistance, why it is that I have chosen to lay out these canonical ways in which ecstasy has been understood in the history of philosophy. As the reader will have noted, in all of the cases described above, so long as human cognition strives towards an absolute that is beyond all being, beyond all predication and distinction, we run into a problem. While we may be able to lay out a path that would cultivate an ethos in people that would prepare them to be thrown into a rapturous state by God, it seems either to be impossible that we could arrive at such an encounter via rational thought—so long as such thought is discursive—or, at best, if we could arrive at such an encounter under our own motive force, we would not be able to describe such an encounter, as our experience of it—so long as it is full and complete—would require the immolation of the distinction between knower and known. Otherwise, there would be an encounter between myself as thing with the One as thing, but this would transform the nature of the One as beyond being into a being, and thus the encounter would be tainted. For this reason, as Hegel has already pointed out for us,

complex—than either Plotinus or Proclus. For him, since the one is in itself defined positively as the super-essential and negatively as the Unknowable—presumably the most Unknowable—we must comport ourselves towards it in a manner that accords with its essence so as to come into communion with it. Only so long as we are willing to debase ourselves into the cloud of unknowing—as it will so famously be called in later medieval theology—will we be able to know the Unknowable. By giving up on knowledge, we are granted something higher than what we relinquish, yet it is not because the object (which can never be an object, of course) accommodates itself to us in an act of grace as it were, but rather because we accommodate ourselves to it. Thus the Pseudo-Dionysius enables, in a manner of speaking, human action to lead to the ecstasy that is the “stillness of all [our] reasoning powers” in our self-effaced union with the One. Nevertheless, the knowledge attained in such a state remains thoroughly incommunicable, thoroughly non-conceptual, and more importantly for the stakes of this project, thoroughly non-discursive; as it would seem that in this identity, all difference of the parts to be unified, is, in fact, effaced.

Philo and Plotinus refer to God as pure being, absolute being—but being beyond beings, being beyond *ousia*, beyond substantiality, beyond beingness (Schürmann, 2003: 147).⁶

As is well-known, Hegel begins his *Science of Logic* by discussing pure being. For the sake of brevity, I will have to leap over certain steps of his argument, though I do not believe that in doing so I am leaving out anything essential. In this text, Hegel focuses on the nature of cognition, or knowing, as such, but of course, we cannot talk about knowing without speaking of what is known in that knowing. And in Hegel's *Logic*, insofar as it is taken as a work of ontology, what is being described is the movement of knowing in which objects are neither considered as strictly identical to thought, nor exclusively existent and coherent outside their being taken up by the understanding. To the extent that the objective of the *Logic* is to begin with "*what is present*" by "setting aside all reflection, all opinions, that one otherwise has," and thereby to treat of immediacy as "it is only *simple immediacy* that is present." Hegel explains:

The simple immediacy is itself a reflective expression and is based upon the distinction from what is mediated. In its true expression this simple immediacy is thereby *pure being*. Just as *pure* knowing should be called nothing other than knowing as such, wholly abstract, so should pure being be called nothing less than *being* in general; being, and nothing else, without any further determination and fullness. (*Werke* 5, 68)

Yet such a thought of pure being, pure knowing, or, as he says, immediacy as such, is nothing but the beginning of cognition of which we can say nothing to the extent that it is

⁶ I refer here to Reiner Schürmann's intensely difficult and provocative reading of Plotinus in his *Broken Hegemonies*. While, I am not entirely convinced by his reading here wherein Plotinus presages Heidegger by articulating what he calls "the full ontological difference," his reading not only made me rethink many presuppositions I held about Neo-Platonism in general but actually made me go and read substantial sections of Plotinus' *Enneads* again. I can ask little more of an author. Schürmann holds that these three terms in Plotinus are "beings, substance, one," and that these terms are reframed by a "fourth century disciple" as "beings, beingness, to-be. In these descriptions," Schürmann continues, "the third term is to be understood as a verb: *uniting, being, then following Heidegger, coming-to-presence, phenomenализing, self-manifesting*" (Schürmann, 2003: 147).

purely immediate and simple—and not yet determinate. Yet, as Hegel says, what is left for us, “is thus only to see what we have in this representation [of a mere beginning as such]” (*Werke* 5, 73). He answers: “It is still nothing, and it is to become something. The beginning is not the pure nothing, but rather a nothing from which something ought to emerge.” For this reason he says, “being is thus also already contained in the beginning.” Yet more importantly, not only are both being and nothing contained in the beginning of cognition *qua* immediacy, but “they are present as distinguished.” For the nothingness can only be known as nothing to that extent that it is not yet something, the something which it is to become. For this reason, the idea of pure being is itself always already only able to be thought to that extent that it is already infiltrated by, if not even infused with, that which it is different from. Accordingly, any philosophical position that stakes itself on an engagement with pure immediacy *and claims to know this immediacy* is always already perverting this immediacy with the mediation contained in any instance of knowing, to the extent that our knowing hinges upon determinations of predication that enable us to distinguish one thing from another. This is why Hegel says, in the first chapter of the *Science of Logic*:

[Being] is pure indeterminacy and empty. – There is nothing in it to be intuited, if intuition can be spoken of here; or it is only this pure, empty intuition it self. There is just as little in it to be thought, or it is precisely merely this empty thinking. Being, the undetermined immediacy is, in fact, *nothing* and neither more nor less than nothing. (*Werke* 5, 82)

Hegel goes on, immediately afterwards, to articulate how nothing is thereby also the same thing as pure being by inverting the argument just presented—both formal and empty. This dialectical interplay prompts him to move onwards and discuss the becoming that is implicitly contained (as has already been mentioned) in the pure beginning as such.

While Hegel is of course quick to note that both immediacy and mediation are always present in our thinking about things, the idea of a pure immediacy is a dead end from an epistemic perspective—as such knowing would be, by definition, empty and incommunicable, and potentially, and by the same line of argumentation, not actually thinkable at all, insofar as thought is always discursive and thereby any thinking of pure being negates itself in its performance.

Is it not the case then that all the accounts of ecstasy I have just provided would fall into this trap? Superficially, I seem forced to answer yes, and for the moment, that is the answer I intend to stick with. The question is whether or not any account of ecstasy whatsoever leads to this same conclusion. Presumably an account of ecstasy that would not fall prey to the force of Hegel's thinking would have to either purport to be immediate while at the same time communicable, or would have to not be immediate and would thus have to be discursive. One question I intend this dissertation to answer is whether or not Schelling and Heidegger offer us a way of thinking about ecstasy that does not lead into these quandaries, particularly in light of the fact that Hegel critiques Schelling for maintaining a conception of immediate knowledge of the unity in indifference of the absolute in his understanding of intellectual intuition (*Werke* 20, 437). My answer to this question is an emphatic yes. I argue for this by showing that for Heidegger and Schelling the basic constitutions of things, including the absolute, are always determined *via negativa* by what they are not (as in Schelling's conception of the organic and in Heidegger's understanding of *Verweisungsganzheit*, or referential totality) and are also always in *process*.

To that end I aim to show that a robust philosophical sense of ecstasy implies equal emphasis upon the *stasis* as it does upon the *ek*—by which I mean to say, ecstasy is not for

Heidegger or Schelling a peculiar moment in our thinking but is rather a basic fact about the way in which things are constituted; in other words, something is what it is (static), only by being outside of itself (ec). If this is taken seriously, than any conception of freedom that we would want to ascribe to the subject would have to be complicated, as any idea of freedom as autonomy would become immediately unintelligible as the *ontos* is thereby thrown into question. Rather, as I will argue, freedom needs to be reconsidered as both a way of describing—or better, naming—the basic constitution of things *and also* a way of describing a particular kind of comportment or bearing that I am referring to in this project as thinking.

Section III Thinking of Freedom

Throughout the course of this dissertation, I speak extensively of thinking. I do not, just to be clear—as the title of this project should indicate—rigidly distinguish philosophy and thinking in the manner that Heidegger does. Thus, I will often speak about philosophizing and thinking synonymously, with the exception of when I establish how and why Heidegger rejects philosophy as onto-theological. Nevertheless, even in Heidegger’s engagements with onto-theology, I believe he engages in a kind of thinking that is fundamental and constitutive of Kantian and post-Kantian philosophy, that is transcendental thinking. Yet Heidegger and Schelling differ in their application of transcendental inquiry from someone like Kant for whom, as Gasché explains—with some help from Dieter Henrich—“transcendental philosophy not only thematizes the forms and categories that make objective knowledge possible but also makes the transcendental subject ‘not merely a logical condition of possible self-consciousness, but that which real consciousness knows to be the subject of all possible real consciousness.’” My suggestion, following Gasché, is that

both Schelling and Heidegger think transcendently insofar as transcendental thinking reflects on the a priori conditions of knowledge, yet both them also “reflect on the ground proper of philosophy, and thus [it] become[s] the medium of the self-reflection of philosophy” (Gasché, 1986: 15). Accordingly, Schelling and Heidegger will refuse to recognize the constitutive function of the transcendental subject (or of any other ‘name for being’ as Heidegger will say, or ‘supreme principle’ as Schelling will call it) without question. Their continued inquiry into the conditions of the possibility of experience, and the conditions of possibility of what is actual—as Žižek said—will lead both them to cast aside any hierarchical sense of grounding. Thus, I show that for both thinkers the pursuit of transcendental grounds leads to the rejection of precisely these kinds of principles in Heidegger’s thinking of *Ereignis* and Schelling’s thinking of the absolute as eternal freedom.

Methodologically speaking, I have written this dissertation in manner that attempts to follow Heidegger and Schelling in these inquiries. Accordingly, the writing and presentation will continually move towards something that resembles an origin point, a solid foundation, only to have that foundation disappear upon our arrival at that point. To that end, my employment of the language of ecstatic thinking in this project is an attempt to name both the process by which one comes to realize the lack of grounds, while at the same time naming the philosophical bearing one must have so as to not rest satiated at any particular name of being. Here ecstasy, just like freedom, serve as the name of both the end of this process of inquiry and as the bearing one must accept so as engage in it. Only a manner of thinking that pursues grounds can lead us to an awareness of groundlessness of things, and only at this moment do we arrive at the realization of the creative role we play in engaging the world in an interactive and dialogical manner.

Thinking then can neither approach objects as if they were strictly opposed to objects, nor can it merely be about the process of critique, naively conceived. Rather it must think towards origins transcendently so as to move past the question of origins, and move towards a conception of the world that more adequately accords to its actual character: that is, it is an ecstatic organic whole of which we are a part.

In order for us to understand how Heidegger and Schelling reconfigure the question of freedom into a question of a description of an experience, both of an *ethos* and of the matter that is to be experienced or encountered in philosophy, we must attend to four basic claims. First, both of these thinkers radically reconfigure our conception of origins and grounds. Second, Heidegger and Schelling both reject any static conception of the subject that has an eternal essence. Third, for both of these thinkers, and though more clearly for Heidegger, the way of existing of the human is reconceived as an unfolding that must be understood as an attunement, disposition, or *ethos*, that shows itself only through the way in which we disclose the world; thus collapsing the dichotomy between activity and passivity. And fourth, both thinkers believe that philosophy, as thinking, is both characterized and made possible by a particular kind of comportment or attunement, i.e., wonder.

To the first point: as I show throughout the duration of the next four chapters, neither Heidegger nor Schelling abide an ontology that maintains a solid, univocal point of origin. In lieu of such a point, the affirmation of which is indicative of what Heidegger calls the first beginning of philosophy in metaphysics, Heidegger and Schelling maintain that being itself is a free giving. This can either be understood as generosity of being that is without a giver, which is one way to describe Heidegger's thinking of *Ereignis*, or as he has it near the end of his writings, *lassen anwesen*, or letting presence (GA15, 364), or eternal

freedom, i.e., *Seinskönnen*, which is Schelling's way of naming the absolute in his *Erlanger Lectures*. In both cases, the subject of the giving of being dissembles in the giving. This goes some way to eliminate the concern of how a subject could be free in the face of mechanistic necessity, as necessary following out from an original, univocal point is not accepted ontologically, for reasons I explain in Chapter II, for either Heidegger or Schelling. However, to say that we then have a free subject is not yet enough.

Heidegger and Schelling both think of the self as something that does not have a persistent essence, rather it is an unfolding, that is only able to be what it is insofar as it is ecstatic into the world in which it exists. Heidegger first exhibits this most clearly in his thinking of *Verweisungsganzheit*, or referential totality, with which he intends to show that any singular entity is only meaningful as what it is insofar as it relates to the whole, the world, in which it finds its meaning (Heidegger, 1963: 70). Heidegger clearly intends this to apply primarily to entities that do not have the character of *Dasein*, however, in Heidegger's assertion that, "Dasein brings its there of its home along with, if it is lacking this it is not only not factually, rather it is not the being of this essence. *Dasein is its disclosedness*" (Heidegger, 1963: 133), I believe we see that this structure of ecstatic reference, and thus the need identity has for difference, applies to human life as well.

For Schelling, the ecstatic character of the human can be seen in his understanding of predication. As we shall see in Chapters V and VI, the structure of the absolute, in which the absolute only is in the constancy of becoming—unfolding, expressively through predications (I/7, 342)—is repeated in human life. In fact, this structure of predication is repeated throughout all life, insofar as all life is defined by reciprocal determination, the play of activity and passivity, or contraction and expansion for Schelling, as we shall see in

Chapter V through an investigation of his *Naturphilosophie* (I/3, 6). Only because of this repetition is the human able to engage the eternal beginning thoughtfully, as for Schelling, like is known by like (I/7, 338).

Given these radical reconfigurations of the status of the self, the subject, and identity in relationship to the world, the problem of freedom must be rethought. It no longer makes sense to attempt to ascribe either autonomous, free agency or a lack thereof in the face of mechanistically determined nature to Heidegger's Dasein or Schelling's dissembling subject. The requisite oppositions and presuppositions of such a distinction are eradicated in Heidegger and Schelling from the very beginning: the distinction between subject and object is collapsed and the solid, onto-theological point of origin is eradicated in lieu of a thinking of the free giving of being which maintains itself as pure, abyssal, possibility.

In light of this abyss of possibility that is being, freedom will be reconfigured in a twofold manner: my claim, in short, is that for both Heidegger and Schelling, freedom is—as I have said—both the manner and matter for thinking. It is the matter for thinking insofar as both thinkers strive to think at the limits of conceptuality and the limits of experience; this limit point is Heidegger's *Ereignis*, which will be discussed in Chapter III, and Schelling's *Unvordenklichkeit des Seyns*, the unprethinkability of being, which we will explore in Chapter IV-VI. Freedom is the manner for thinking insofar both of these thinkers place great stock in what Heidegger calls *Befindlichkeit*, or our *Stimmung*, i.e., how we find ourselves, or, our attunement; and I argue that there is an attunement that could be called either a free attunement, or an attunement that leads us to an experience of freedom.

For Heidegger, insofar as entities are only disclosed to us through our meaningful engagements with them, and all such engagements entail purposive engagement with a

referential totality, Hans Ruin explains, “to have a world, to have access to beings, is to be disposed in a certain manner, to be in a certain mood.” As Ruin goes on to explain, Dasein “can never not be in one of its moods,” the world is always disclosed to us, given to us, through the way in which we attend to it, knowingly or unknowingly (Ruin, 2000: 152). Let us look at two longer quotes from Heidegger so as to clarify what is at stake in the idea of *Stimmung* for Heidegger. He writes:

An attunement is a way ... in the sense of a melody that does not merely hover over the so-called proper being at hand of humans, but that sets the tone for such a being, i.e., attunes and determines the manner and how of their being ... [Attunement] is ... the *fundamental manner in which Dasein is as Dasein* ... [It] is not—is never—simply a consequence or side-effect of our thinking, doing, and letting. It is—to put it crudely—the presuppositions for such things, the “medium” within which they first happen. (GA29, 101)

In another lecture course written nearly ten years after the above quote, he writes:

A deep-rooted and very old habit of experience and speech stipulates that we interpret feeling and attunements [*Gefühle und Stimmungen*—as well as willing and thinking—in a psychological-anthropological sense as occurrences and processes within an organism ... This also means that we are “subjects,” present at hand, who are displaced *into* this or that attunement by “getting” them. In truth, however, it is the attunement that displaces us, namely into this or that understanding or disclosure of the world, into such and such a resolve or occlusion of one’s *self*, a self which is *essentially* a being-in-the-world. (GA45, 161)

As Bret Davis explains, “A fundamental attunement is a comportment ‘prior to’ the determination of any subject, object, or intentional relation between them” (Davis, 2007: 7).

As Davis goes on to elaborate, when we speak of attunement as fundamental, or as a *Grundstimmung*, we are talking about an attunement, “first opens (one) up (to) a world, prior to the determination of ‘who’ is opened up to ‘what’” (Davis, 2007: 8). Davis’ point is to show that when we speak of a distinction between subject and object, for example, we must

acknowledge that the world in which this distinction abides ontologically *is already founded in a particular attunement.*

Take a trite example of an ontic sense of attunement as I understand it from *Being and Time*: if I am sitting on the bus, when in a very good mood, after having received notification that I have a job interview, and I encounter a young couple engaging in amorous activity a few rows ahead of me, I will think to myself, ‘that’s so nice, they’re young and in love.’ Now, if the same couple were in front of me the next day after I popped a bike tire on the way to school, received bad teaching evaluations, and discovered that my top choice for employment was not going to call me for an interview, I may think, ‘Those fools! Don’t they know how terrible, unfair, and merciless the world is?’ A more robust example of an attunement that may actually get us closer to the sense an attunement that would be fundamental would be the following: imagine the difference in the way in which an untouched segment of hardwood forest is seen by a camper as opposed to by a logger. The former is likely to experience the forest in terms of its beauty, its naturalness—as an escape from civilization; whereas the logger is likely to see board feet of lumber. Taking our cue from this second example—as it is not so incidental as the former—I claim that attunement amounts to an *ethos*, which means as much as to say, a character, which is quite consonant with the account given in Kant. However, from Heidegger and Schelling’s perspective, Kant’s error is to say that this character has some kind of existence or persistence outside of our engagement with the world. As we shall see, for both Heidegger and Schelling, given their emphasis upon ecstasy, we are *always* engaging the world. Thus our *ethos* is always active: rather than being an eternal character, “*ethos* means bearing [*Haltung*],” the way that we carry ourselves in and towards the world that we are amidst and that environs us (GA19,

178). The question for this project is as follows: given that Heidegger insists, “*attunement has always, and in every case, disclosed being-in-the-world as a whole, and first makes possible our being directed towards anything*” (Heidegger, 1963: 137), what kind of attunement is the proper attunement for philosophy; or rather, what affect does our attunement have on attempting to think being in its most “profound meaning” as “*Lassen*” (GA15, 363)?

In attending to the question of the origins of philosophy, Ruin explains, “Philosophy has its origin not in an act of reason, but in a certain emotional displacement vis-à-vis being as such, in wonder that it is” (Ruin, 2000: 155). Ruin’s assertion that philosophy begins in wonder is of course nothing new. In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle famously asserts, “for by way of wondering, people both now and at first began to philosophize” (982b15), and in Plato’s *Theaetetus*, we not only find the famous story of Thales falling into the well due to his wonder at all that surrounds him (174b), we also find constant descriptions and proclamations of wonder throughout the dialogue from the mouth of both Socrates and Theaetetus as they exhibit a proper philosophical *ethos*.

In Schelling’s writing, this *ethos* is made manifest in his discussion of those who have the ‘feeling of freedom,’ which inspires all those who have experienced to make all things into its analog through dialogical engagement with the presencing of things. It is further made manifest in his demands that we debase ourselves before beings so as to not overdetermine how they presence to us; this will be covered thoroughly in Chapter VI. In Heidegger this *ethos* is made manifest in his assertion of *Gelassenheit*, or releasement, as “openness to the mystery,” which amounts to the maintenance of a questioning stance in the face of the abyssal character of presencing (Heidegger, 1959: 23f).

Thus, for both Heidegger and Schelling, the abyssal character of being can only properly be encountered insofar as one bears oneself towards the world with an attunement that is proper to this abyssal character of being. The experience of freedom thus means that we both carry ourselves in a stance of what Schelling calls ‘free thinking’ or what Heidegger calls *Gelassenheit*, so that we can experience the free giving of being. As Sallis puts it, “freedom is indeed a kind of freedom *for...for* the very openness that lets [things] come forth manifestly and bindingly in the open” (Sallis, 2002: 8). But as Sallis explains, this is not something that one, for Heidegger, can simply will. Rather, “determined from *aletheia*, freedom as letting-be—the essence of freedom—proves to be exposure and ek-sistence” (Sallis, 2002: 10). The question is, however, how and where this freedom as letting-be surfaces. I would like to simultaneously ask and suggest with Sallis whether or not it emerges in questioning. He writes, “The question is whether the beginning of philosophy—every beginning of philosophy, every enactment of philosophical beginning—is not, in precisely this sense, a matter of free thinking” (Sallis, 2002: 12).

Freedom is thus both the manner and matter of thinking for Schelling and Heidegger: a matter and manner for thinking that brings about an experience of displacement—a displacement that is possible only insofar as we are already displaced, ecstatic—an experience we can hold onto insofar as we encounter things in their question-worthiness. Here we then become persons of possibility, opening ourselves up to the possibility of being by coming to the question of self-knowledge anew, recognizing that we are ourselves only insofar as we are actively in relation to what environs us.

Section IV
Chapter Breakdown

In Chapter II of this project, I offer an account of what I conceive of as Heidegger's phenomenology. My objective is to show that Heidegger's phenomenological project differs from Husserl's project—at least on Heidegger's account—in large part due to his emphasis upon the both temporally and spatially ecstatic character of both Dasein and all other entities. This ecstatic character of Dasein forces us to reconsider the status of the phenomenologist in his project, while at the same time forcing us to rethink what exactly is being attended to in his phenomenological engagements. I argue that given Heidegger's insistence upon the referential constitution of all things, he eradicates the possibility of us ever finding a secure basis, an absolute ground that would secure the identities or meanings of things. Thus, Heidegger's phenomenology brings us to the abyssal character of being.

Chapter III picks up this thought, and attempts to offer a reading of Heidegger's later writings in light of my account of his phenomenological project. I will elucidate and defend that freedom as the realization of the lack of necessity of any particular epochal determination of being, as the experience of possibility through contingency, is what emerges for us in the experience of thinking the clearing. To get at this point with sufficient poignancy it will be necessary to think through quite carefully the role that history plays for Heidegger in relationship to what he calls words for being and the first beginning of philosophy as metaphysics. Then I explore the relationship between the lack of a word for being and the thinkability of the clearing in some detail in order to ask whether or not the clearing, insofar as it is precisely that which escapes and grants the possibility of thinking things which are extant, is only thinkable under the name *Ereignis*—which is not a new name

for being—via *Gelassenheit* thought of as a particular kind of comportment, that which is proper to thinking, when all our other words break. Here we will encounter intimations of what Heidegger calls “the other beginning,” the experience that we have in the face of the abyssal character of things insofar as we do not attempt to stop-gap this abyss with a new principle or name for being, either wonder or terror.

My objective in Chapter IV is to make a case for the claim that Schelling holds open the other beginning and does not respond to the confrontation with the abyss with the erection of new principles. I make my case taking our starting point in Heidegger’s reading of Hölderlin and the relationship between philosophy and poetry, insofar as the task of these two domains is to say being—which for later Heidegger can only mean *Ereignis*—and name the holy. I will lay the stakes of Schelling’s questioning of “eternal freedom” via Heidegger’s reading of Hölderlin’s language of the holy, insofar as both of “eternal freedom” and “the holy,” in some sense, name nature as that which is eternally past. I will then lay out a rigorous reading of what the eternal past means for Schelling. In order to do so I will deal with a number of Schelling’s texts from his middle period, particularly the *Ages of the World*, the *Initia Philosophiae Universae* (which I will refer to as the *Erlanger Lectures*), and the *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom and Matters Connected Therewith* (which I will refer to as the *Freedom* essay). My claim will be that nature and this eternal past are ways that Schelling names freedom. I will show that freedom serves a double role in Schelling’s corpus: it indicates the matter and manner of thinking. In doing so I attend to Heidegger’s critique of Schelling in his lectures on the *Freedom* essay in order to show that Heidegger overdetermines Schelling’s understanding of the absolute, turning it, unjustly into a new onto-theological principle. Instead I show that the absolute *qua* subject is a subject

that disassembles, it is only expression, and Schelling thus turns the absolute into something that sounds an awful lot more like the free giving of being rather than a giver that is complete in advance.

Chapter V continues the task set out in Chapter IV, by showing how Schelling makes freedom the manner of thinking, insofar as the absolute *qua* eternal freedom is the matter to be thought. I show how this becomes clear through multiple moments in his corpus including his thinking of decision in *Ages of the World*, his understanding of the organic in his *Naturphilosophie* writings, and most importantly his insistence upon what he calls alternately knowing not-knowing, Socratic ignorance, and *Gelassenheit* in his *Erlanger Lectures*. I show that Schelling's understanding of the unfolding of being gives him the ability to account for why human thinking, as a reflection of God's unfolding, must give up on being able to capture being in concepts in advance if it is to actually be able to think being in its movement.

Given that the movement of being is groundless, the way in which human thinking attends to it is as underdetermined as the presencing of being itself. Thus in Chapter VI, I show how Schelling's thinking of the underdetermined character of being leads him to his account of the possibility for good and evil. I argue that this experience of evil—as the experience of the nihilation of the generosity of being—whether via environmental degradation, genocide, or even in the case of Schelling, the existence of the nation-state—can be explicitly brought to bear upon Schelling's rejection of conceptual categorization in lieu of a thinking that “accompanies and witnesses” the movement of being step-by-step. It is our ability to either embrace or deny this play that I will attend to in the final chapter. This leads to two final philosophical concerns: first, what is the measure of

evil for Schelling giving the groundlessness of being, and second, how can we ever engage the world discursively and not lapse into evil on Schelling's account? Here I will attempt to show that the experience of freedom is something that is not a side effect of the will to truth, but rather the further goal of thinking for Heidegger and Schelling beyond establishing the truth of things.

CHAPTER II

THE ECSTASY OF PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE DESTRUCTION OF ORIGINS

In the introduction I briefly articulated the role of *Befindlichkeit* or *Stimmung* in Heidegger's *Being and Time*. In light of the work done in the intro, the work of this chapter will be twofold. First, I hope to establish an understanding of the function of ecstasy—or ek-stases/ek-sistence—in Heidegger's work, with particular focus on the *Letter on "Humanism"*. Second, I connect this “rigorous strain of thinking” ecstasy in Heidegger to the phenomenological demands made in *Being and Time* and elsewhere in Heidegger's early writings, particularly *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. I claim that the phenomenological demand in Heidegger never goes away—and that given Heidegger's emphasis upon *In-der-Welt-Sein* and the temporal ecstasies in *Being and Time* his conception of phenomenology takes us far away from a subject-centered model of reflection that seems to dominate in Husserl's conception of phenomenology, at least in Heidegger's reading and critique thereof, as it presents itself in this lecture course form the late 1920s, which relies fundamentally upon the priority of immediate intuition.

I hope to show, with Walter Brogan, that, “Heidegger overcomes the modern concept of isolated subjectivity and provides a basis for understanding the fundamentally communal and relational character of Dasein.” Not only do I agree with Brogan that Heidegger articulates a conception of identity that *is* relational and ecstatic, but that this conception is retrieved through “his philosophical destruction of the modern, transcendental

subject” (Brogan, 2005: 151). Here, I will argue against the view of Dreyfus who holds that, “Heidegger seeks to show that the shared public world is the only world there is or can be” (Dreyfus, 1991: 301). Such a view, it seems to me would miss the fact that Heidegger’s thinking has always already in its very inception attempted to push behind the back of what is given to us in the shared public world, thought naively.

I will argue in the next chapter that this task is continued in his later works, but here I will attempt to lay the ground work for thinking phenomenologically in light of a fundamental engagement with things that present themselves as an occurrence, rather than as entities which are to be bracketed and encountered eidetically. Only once a move is made towards thinking essence verbally does the possibility of thinking an *arche* or an *Urgrund* truly begin to get called into question—and I believe that Heidegger’s phenomenological demands, from the very beginning, require us to think beings as they *west*, not in their *Wesen*, insofar as this latter term is understood as an eternal character.

Section I **Why We Must Stand Aside (Ourselves)**

In the *Letter on “Humanism”* Heidegger writes, “Ek-sistence can only be said of the essence of the human, meaning, only of the human way “to be”; for the human alone, insofar as we experience it, is admitted to the sending of ek-sistence” (GA9, 324). Why does Heidegger parse ek-sistence with a hyphen? Heidegger explains that what is at issue in this reconfigured sense of ek-sistence, is precisely that the essence of the human is to *stand out*. Etymologically, we see that both *stasis* and *sistere* in their respectively Greek and Latin origins, are location words. They both name solidity, consistency, and having a place. When we couple either of these terms together with the Greek prefix, *ek*, which denotes the

exterior, the outside, potentially even a moving away from, we end up with a term which in itself seems to present a contradiction. We have standing and consistency on the one hand, and on the other we have movement away, flux, the outside. Hence when we encounter ek-sistence, or ek-stasis, we must simultaneously hear both inside and outside—we must hear a standing which stands in virtue of its flux, and as its flux. We must hear a consistency which is only insofar as it is an ecstasy.

How does ek-stasis apply to humans? This ecstatic character of the human does not just mean that the human stands out from the rest of the beings who are alive, insofar as they are *Da-sein*, but they stand out from them, the rest of all beings who are living, precisely by standing outside of themselves, and being themselves only insofar as they are outside themselves. Let us dig deeper to get an understanding of Heidegger's point, which is an ontological claim about the basic constitution of the human. He writes, "the human essentially occurs [*wesst*] in such a way that humans are the "there" [*das "Da"*], meaning, the clearing of being. This "being" of the *Da*, and only it, has the fundamental trait of ek-sistence, meaning, of an ecstatic inherence in the truth of being" (GA9, 325). In a discussion of the *Da* as it functions in *Being and Time*, John Sallis writes, "That Being-in is constituent of the Being of Dasein means: Dasein is always its "there", Dasein is its disclosedness, Dasein is a clearing. Later another synonym will be added: Dasein is its truth" (Sallis, 1995: 120). This whole litany of "synonyms"—disclosedness, clearing, truth, and others which will encounter sooner than later—is something which we must think through quite carefully if we are to begin to think the way in which *Da-sein* is ecstatic, and the way in which thinking can be seen as a name for a freeing movement. These thoughts, contained in this brief

assertion from the *Letter on "Humanism"*, are what we will have to struggle with, in various mutations, for the rest of this chapter.

In order to clarify this point, however, we must make a foray into Heidegger's critique of the conception of the human as the rational animal, and the accompanying conception of thinking as representational activity of the human subject. Heidegger writes, "the human as the ek-sistent counterthrow of being is more than *animal rationale* as this human is clearly less related to the human that conceives of itself in terms of subjectivity" (GA9, 342). The rational animal and a notion of individuated subjectivity are brought into intimate relationship in his text, and it is the notion of thinking that Heidegger sees as accompanying the human *qua* subject that we must elucidate in order to call it into question. This notion of the monistic, isolated, subject is central to an understanding not only of the way in which Heidegger re-thinks thinking, but also, for why an entirely new way of thinking freedom *must* emerge in his text.

If I were an isolated monad, if the way in which I encounter the world were from the perspective of an absolutely individuated 'I', then I must have a particular way of engaging that world which stands outside of me. To think about this world which stands over and against me means to understand that world as something fundamentally other than me, and insofar as I am subject, this means that this world is an object: the *Gegenstand* which literally 'stands against' me. This language points to the interpretative violence that is at stake when humans are conceived of as isolated subjects. I must encounter that which stands against me, the objectivity of things, and bring it under concepts—grasp it so as to be able to represent it to myself—so that it becomes thinkable for me. Why must I engage in this process of bringing this world under conceptual determination? Why must I re-present

things? The reason is that insofar as the world is not like *me*, or I do not belong to the world, or the materiality of the world of sensuous experience is not like my thoughts, I have to make the world accommodate itself to me. For Heidegger, in *Age of the World Picture*, the implication of such thinking is that the world, as pure object, is essentially dead matter, the *bule* which my mind trans-forms (*morphe*) into something which I am able to think. “But when humanity becomes the first and proper *subiectum*, this means that humanity becomes the being upon which all beings in their manner of being and their truth are grounded” (GA5, 88). The conception of the human as ‘that-which-underlies’, the *hypokeimenon*, of all beings brings us into the epoch wherein thinking is fundamentally constructing the world in which we live—hence our thoughts as representational are instances of our minds forming the matter of experience, which is nothing, i.e. formless matter and hence unencounterable, on its own terms.

Yet this manner of thinking about the world leads to logical contradictions. In *The Inoperative Community*, Jean-Luc Nancy articulates the untenability of such a conception of the human; whether we want to speak of an absolute whole or of an absolute individual, we find ourselves in a circumstance that reduces everything to the same in such a way as to eliminate the differentiation which is essential to thought. Thinking this through in terms of the absolute, insofar as it is something that we conceive of as an absolutely closed system, and therefore an analog of the modern subject as *hypokeimenon*, Nancy writes, “The absolute must be the absolute of its own absoluteness or not be at all. In other words: to be absolutely alone, it is not enough that I be so; I must be absolutely alone being alone—and this is of course contradictory. The logic of the absolute violates the absolute” (Nancy, 1991: 4). The claim is that if something is to be fundamentally alone, absolutely alone, it must be the only

thing in the world which is alone, and hence the only thing in the world—otherwise there would be a whole world of other isolated entities. Here we are left asking with Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “How could there be several absolutes” (Merleau-Ponty, 2006: 435)? Merleau-Ponty, like Nancy after him, believes that it does not make sense to posit something as being alone unless there is something from which that first entity can distinguish itself. Thus even being alone requires that there is something which we separate ourselves from—some solution, some mixture, which we pull ourselves away from. This pulling away from the solution, the mixture, is precisely what the absolute is. At issue here is precisely what it means to be, to exist. If we want to conceive of ourselves as isolated monads or as subsumed entirely within some greater collectivity, we arrive at a logical contradiction—there is no thing, no entity, without distinction from that which it is not, and hence nothing without differentiation.

In light of his analysis of the absolute, Nancy explains that there is no fundamental difference between such a notion of absolute individuation or absolute totality, as both of them attempt to think outside of all relation, which insofar as we are willing to accept the tradition handed down to us from Socrates in the *Theaetetus*, cannot occurring except through an originary difference—*dianoesthai is dialegesthai*, thinking-through is fundamentally a dialogue. Only in light of differentiation—the play of light and shadow can we have a world. The identity of myself as a self same entity occurs after this original rupture. For Nancy this is the primacy of ecstasy. He writes, “[singularity] is not enclosed in a form ... but is what it is ... only through its extension, through the areality that above all extroverts it in its very being—whatever the degree or the desire of its “egoism”—and that makes it exist only by *exposing it to an outside*” (Nancy, 1991: 29). This sense of extroversion, the way in which all

things that are fundamentally expose themselves to their outside—and only constitute themselves in this exposure—is the sense of ecstasy that Nancy thinks we have to push ourselves towards if we are to arrive at a manner of thinking and engaging the world which is not self-contradictory. If we want to think the fundamentally ‘in-common’ character of all things, we must return, or arrive at for the first time, a rich and complex sense of ecstasy.

Merleau-Ponty drives this point home even further when he discusses the problem of other selves. He argues that, “the plurality of consciousness is impossible if I have an absolute consciousness of myself” (Merleau-Ponty, 2006: 434) because otherwise there would never need to be an opening through which we would have access to something other than us, i.e., we would never need to learn anything. All things, potentially including anything that there is which we might want to call external, would be a product of the self as *hypokeimenon*. We would not only be in full possession of ourselves, but also in full possession of the world. Here, questions would not emerge, answers would not be required, and foreignness would be a foreign thought. Merleau-Ponty goes on to say that, “it is ultimately with God that the *cogito* brings me into coincidence” (Merleau-Ponty, 2006: 434). One need only think of Spinoza’s argument from the appendix to book I of his *Ethics* to appreciate the point being made here. Spinoza writes, “if God acts for the sake of an end, he necessarily wants something which he lacks”, and a being who lacks something, strictly speaking, cannot be God—and certainly cannot be the absolute (Spinoza, 1994: 112). If you desire something, than it is clearly the case that something exists which is not already part of you—and thus you must posit yourself as being in a solution with other things.⁷

⁷ This, however, is only half of the consequence the *cogito* and its relationship to the generation of the self as God, at least in the way in which Merleau-Ponty, Nancy, and Heidegger receive it; the other consequence is ethical. As Enrique Dussel explains with regards to the European encounter with the Americas, “Europe has

Prior to moving forward to our discussion of ecstasy, permit me to quote John Russon as a manner of recapitulating and presaging where we are headed. Explaining that that “how the object exists is reflective of the interpretive demands of the subject,” and that “the subject is already subordinated to the demands of the object,” Russon writes:

Human reality is this situation, this event of meaning, this happening of a subject-object pair. In identifying the subject-object pair as the human reality, we have gone beyond any appeal either to a more original choosing agent that goes out to meet an alien object, or to an objective truth that forces itself onto an alien subject for explaining why things are the way that they are. This is because we have seen that the subject and object so conceived only exist as abstracted aspects of the meaningful situation, the comprehending relation. (Russon, 2003: 20)

Yet how are we attend philosophically and rigorously to this comprehending relation? In order to bring these thoughts on and from Merleau-Ponty and Nancy back into relation to the questions we have been putting to and receiving from Heidegger, let us return to a lengthy quotation in which Nancy most clearly announces the stake and *origins* of this question of ecstasy:

Ecstasy, if we understand it according to a rigorous strain of thinking that would pass ... by way of Schelling and Heidegger, implies no effusion, and even less some form of effervescent illumination. Strictly speaking, it defines the impossibility either of an individuality, in the precise sense of the term, or of a pure collective totality. The theme of the individual and that of communism are closely bound up with (and

constituted other cultures, worlds, and persons as objects; like something “thrown before” its eyes. The “covered” [*cubierto*] has been “dis-covered” [*des-cubierto*]: *ego cogito cogitatum*, europeanized, but immediately “en-covered” [*en-cubierto*] as other. An Other constituted as the Same” (Dussel, 1992: 36). Dussel explains a litany of reasons as to why this *encubierto* took place in lieu of an authentic *des-cubierto*—some historical, some philosophical—but what I am interested in here is his connection between the *Yo conquisto* and the *ego cogito* that he draws. Dussel explains, “the modern *ego* was born in its self-constitution over and against the dominated.” The origins of the modern self as kind of sovereign can be encountered here in Dussel’s assertion of the identity of the *cogito* and the ‘I conquer’ of the *Yo conquisto*. The *Yo conquisto* of the subject taken as *hypokeimenon* over and against the world as pure *hyle* is taken to its logical consequence when we see other people and/or land taken as the pure matter to be worked upon by the active subject whose task it is to mold the world into their image. It is not an innocent coincidence that humans who take themselves as sovereign begin to act as if they were sovereign like the biblical God who creates humans in his own image. Thus, not only does an illogical, contradictory position follow from the postulation of pure, self-certain, self-possessed subjectivity—it also yields a wildly destructive *ethos*. This *ethos* will remain a question for us for the remainder of this project, and it will be returned to in full and in various modulations in Chapter VI.

bound together in) the general problematic of immanence. They are bound together in their denial of ecstasy. (Nancy, 1991: 6)

Here we see Nancy announcing those concerns which we have already been discussing in this chapter—the status of individuation and totality as both eliminations of the differentiation which is constitutive of our being—but we also see him naming names. If we want to arrive at a rigorous thinking of ecstasy—this extroversion which defines all of life—we have to return to a “strain of thinking that would pass by way of Schelling and Heidegger.” Why is Nancy concerned with pointing us to a “rigorous strain of thinking” in relationship to the question of ecstasy? As we discussed in the introduction, the most pressing reason is precisely the connotations of madness and insanity, what Hegel called *Schwärmerei*, that people tend to associate with such a thought. Is not ecstasy reserved for the St. Theresa’s of the world who have experiences of divine inspiration? Is it not a specific kind of immersion into the immanent oneness of being? Nancy not only thinks that if we want to understand why this is not the case, we must return to the Heidegger and Schelling’s thinking of ecstasy, he thinks we must return there to understand that this *is* the way in which our world essentially unfolds.

How does this thinking of ecstasy assert itself in Heidegger’s text? We have already brought this to light in this chapter—Da-sein is as ek-sistence. This was the reason why we had to make an excursus into Nancy in the first place. Earlier we said that Da-sein ek-sists, stands out, into the truth of being; now I believe we may be circumscribing exactly what is at stake in thinking about the first portion of this statement—Da-sein’s ek-sistence. Why does Da-sein ek-sist? Why does Da-sein stand outside of itself? Because this is the fundamental character of all things—as Adorno will say in *Negative Dialectics*, “What is, is more than it is.

This “more” is not imposed upon it, but remains immanent to it, as that which has been ousted from it” (Adorno, 1966: 162). That does not mean that we cannot be mistaken about the way in which we are always already thrown *out of ourselves* into a world, but this does mean that it is a mistake when we take ourselves to be *subiectum*, we are not the site at which the consistency and coherence of the world is guaranteed, rather we are part of a complex constellation of identities which are constituted through their relationships which the entirety of that which is nonidentical with them. Even logically speaking it is an error to think outside of the realm of the ecstatic, as it is brings us to a self-contradictory understanding of the world. We are always-already in relation to those things which surround us and swarm in on us, and we are only what we are insofar as we are constituted by those relations, i.e. our relationship to those things which stand outside of us. Merleau-Ponty writes,

What I discover and recognize through the *cogito* is not psychological immanence, the inherence of all phenomena in ‘private states of consciousness’, the blind contact of sensation itself. It is not even transcendental immanence, the belonging of all phenomena to a constituting consciousness, the possession of clear thought by itself. It is the deep-seated momentum of transcendence which is my very being, the simultaneous contact with my own being and with the world’s being (Merleau-Ponty, 2006: 438).

Here, Merleau-Ponty’s transcendence ought to be heard as a reiteration of the sense of the ek-static character of the human that I have been fleshing out through Heidegger. The I that I am relies on things which are outside of me, in fact the I that I am is this relating, this excessive, ecstatic moment of self-transcendence. Hence, *I* can only say “me” because of the way in which I am more than just my isolated bodily presence. I am ecstatic in my world both spatially and temporally. Another way to approach Da-sein’s spatial ecstasy is through Heidegger’s thinking of the *In-der-Welt-Sein*, being-in-the-world, character of Da-sein.

Heidegger writes, “there is no such thing as the ‘coexistence’ of a being called ‘Da-sein’ with another being called ‘world’” (Heidegger, 1966: 74). Why Da-sein and the world are not sufficiently separable to ever coexist, or stand side by side, has already been explicated by the way we have considered ecstasy, but let me clarify this point again. I cannot say ‘I’ without the relations in which I stand. In fact, this way of thinking the ‘I’ as a result already ought to muddy up the way in which phenomenology is traditionally understood; this is the claim that we will return to in section three of this chapter.

Alejandro Vallega elucidates the relationship between Da-sein and being-in-the-world. He writes, “the question of being occurs in Da-sein, and Da-sein may only occur as a being-in-the-world along with others, a being with others that makes room for others” (Vallega, 2003: 64). That is to say, Da-sein occurs as the making room for others, but its occurrence is possible only insofar as it is constituted by that which it makes room for. We have a relationship of reciprocal constitution. We do not lie as the *subiectum* of the world for Heidegger, nor are we fundamentally apart from it. Both of these models are entirely contradictory to the basic understanding of the *In-der-Welt-Sein* in *Being and Time*. Da-sein is primordially *bei* the world, amidst the world, not alongside of it. Thus, “such taking up relationships towards the world is only possible *because* Da-sein is as being-in-the-world as it is. This constitution of Being does not first emerge because outside of the being with the character of Da-sein still another being is present and meets up with it. This other being can ‘meet’ with Da-sein only so far as it is able to show itself from out of itself within a *world*” (Heidegger, 1966: 77). This meeting is not merely the collision of two bodies, but a knowing relationship. Heidegger will go on to explain that knowing does not bring us into such a relation, but rather a knowing relationship is possible only because of the primordial fact of

our being-in-the-world. Recall Merleau-Ponty's comment about the *cogito*: a being that was actually completely self-possessed would never even ask questions. We can only have knowledge about the world because we are constituted as fundamentally ecstatic amidst it. This belonging to the world does not have to bring us to a complete collapse of distinction between self and world—as this would be to err on the opposite side. Yet we are like the world, we are amidst the world. For Heidegger, the fact we can hear (*hören*) the address (*Anspruch*) of the world demonstrates our belonging (*gehören*). We do not constitute our reality, nor do we constitute our thoughts. For the sake of adumbration: we are given *die Sache*, the matter, for thought by the world in which we find ourselves, and this *Sache*—this matter—is what it is because of the constitution of this world into which we are thrown.

Section II Time and Identity

The bodily 'I' that I am, is constituted by what I am not—that is, by the referential totality of the world into which I am thrown. But this is only half of the account of the ecstasy of Da-sein in *Being and Time*; we must now turn to Da-sein's temporal ecstasy. For Heidegger, the temporal 'I' that I am is constituted by the ways in which I am ec-static into my past and my future. Da-sein is constituted by three temporal ecstasies; the center point of which, if such a thing could be said to exist, is where one will find the being that Da-sein is. This center point does not guarantee the coherency of the three temporal ecstasies, but rather is the result of the phenomenological experience of these three ecstasies which are named as (1) anticipation, or coming-towards-itself, (2) having-been, and (3) presencing or making-present. Thus we not only stand outside of ourselves into the world in terms of spatiality—we also do so in terms of temporality. Richard Polt writes, "we *stand out* into

future possibilities, into a past heritage, and into a present world”, and it is only as the gathering of these three moment, as I have said, that we have consistency as Da-sein (Polt, 1999: 34). Following Daniela Vallega-Neu’s reading of *Being and Time*, these three moments could be described as follows: first, Da-sein is given to itself in relationship to its ownmost possibility, i.e. its death. That is to say, first and foremost Da-sein is always running ahead of itself, and experiences itself as coming back to itself thus providing it with a manner of understanding itself now. Insofar as this futural character fundamentally relates to Da-sein’s finitude—the “ownmost” possibility which is the closure of all possibilities—it takes a certain sort of precedence; as only when Da-sein has a relation to what it is to be, i.e., a relationship to its projects, do the other temporal ek-stases become sensible and thinkable. Heidegger writes, “anticipation makes *Da-sein* *properly* futural and in it is true that anticipation itself is only possible insofar as *Da-sein* as *a being* in general always already comes towards itself, i.e., in its being in general it is futural” (Heidegger, 1966: 431). *Da-sein* is thus defined as understanding itself primarily in terms of its being oriented towards its future possibilities, which are not seen as something not yet arrived, but rather determine the meaning or sense of *Da-sein*’s being in its present.

After this coming back to itself, *Da-sein* is able to take over its past as thrownness in a meaningful way—and this implies that *Da-sein* is always a having-been (*Gewesenheit*). Without a past, there is nothing to interpret in light of the coming-back-to-oneself out of anticipation. Vallega-Neu writes, “*Da-sein* can come toward itself [first ectases] only insofar as it *is* a having-been. *Da-sein* can come toward itself only in *coming back toward* itself” (Vallega-Neu, 2003: 20). The fact that *Da-sein* has a past in its thrownness is in one sense the condition of having a future—yet within a phenomenological engagement of the way in

which the meaning of ones being makes its manifest, the past—the character of having been (*Gewesenheit*)—“springs up, in a certain way, from the future” (Heidegger, 1966: 431). Our past is made sense of—it is given its sense, meaning, and direction—by Da-sein’s anticipatory character.

The third ecstases is thus the presencing that occurs in the way in which we interpret what is encountered in our actions at this moment. The fact that particular beings disclose themselves to us in certain ways in the present moment of our being-in-the-world hinges upon the *Sinn* generated by the character of Da-sein as anticipatory and having-been. Without these movements into the future and past, we have no meaningful, present engagement with our world as *Zubanden*, to hand. Heidegger writes, “The having-been springs up from the future in such a way that the future which has been (better: which is having been) releases the present (*Gegenwart*) from out of itself” (GA9, 432).⁸ Thus the manner in which we interpret our present milieu phenomenologically is always determined by the way in which we are ecstatic into our future, past, and present.

Heidegger is quite explicit in the paragraphs that follow in *Being and Time* about how this model of thinking temporality takes us far afield from any ordinary conception of time which could simply think the past as what has been, the present as what is, and the future as what is not yet. Rather the sense of the future and the past here are alive and robust in the manner in which they constitute our present self-understanding. This is why Heidegger has

⁸ This is quite a tricky passage in German. Heidegger is playing with the word *Gewesen*, changing it from a simple adjective—which even itself presents a degree of awkwardness—to a gerund. I chose to render this as the shift from “the future which has been” to “that which is having been” in order to demonstrate that the *Gewesenheit* character of Dasein is in no way terminated as it past. To think in such a way would lead us into an ordinary conception of time, thus returning us to the problem of origins. For posterity, the German as a whole reads, “*Die Gewesenheit entspringt der Zukunft, so zwar, dass die gewesene (besser gewesende) Zukunft die Gegenwart aus sich entlässt.*”

the caveat in the previous quotation wherein he says “*besser gewesen~~e~~*” after having said “*gewesene*” to describe our futurity, and our relationship to our past—our *Gewesenheit*, our having been, is something which must be thought as actively taking place, and hence the switch the gerund. Permit me to quote Heidegger at some length prior to moving to investigation of how this sense of temporality necessitates a radicalizing of phenomenology.

He writes,

Future, having been, and present show the phenomenal characters of the “towards-oneself,” the “return from,” and the “letting-oneself-be-met-by.” The phenomena of the towards..., the to/from..., and the amidst...reveal temporality as that which is simply *ekstatikon*. *Temporality is the primordially “outside of itself” in and for itself.* We therefore call the characteristic phenomena of future, having been, and the present the ecstasies of temporality. Temporality is not a being prior to this that first emerges from out of itself, rather its essence is the temporalizing in the unity of the ecstasies. (Heidegger, 1966: 435)

The inherence of an identity, the guarantee of consistency, the possibility of having a direction or meaning hinges first and foremost upon the temporalizing of temporality that describes Da-sein. Thus, to reiterate, not only are we outside of ourselves in a world, but we are outside of ourselves across time—or we are ourselves insofar as we exceed ourselves. There is no site of origin here from which the other temporal ecstasies take their leave and their foundation—rather the coherency emerges in the intertwined character of these three moments. Da-sein *is* essentially outside itself, Da-sein essentially occurs as its ecstasies, Da-sein is its temporality, and temporality as Heidegger explains *is not*. It is not a being, even though we speak of it that way, rather temporality temporalizes (*Zeitlichkeit zeitigt*) (Heidegger, 1966: 435). Thus Da-sein is not—in a certain sense—rather Da-sein occurs. What might this mean for the ways in which we normally conceive of thinking? Who, what,

or where is the seat of thinking? From where does thinking emerge and how does this transformation of the identity and being of Da-sein alter the status of the phenomenologist?

Section III Thinking Outside Ourselves

Concerning the superstitions of the logicians: I will never tire of repeatedly underlining a small terse fact that is only grudgingly conceded by these superstitious people—namely, that a thought comes when “it” wants, and not when “I” want, so that it is a falsification of the facts to say that the subject “I” is the condition of the predicate “think.” *It* thinks; but that this “it” is clearly the old celebrated “I” is, put mildly, only a supposition, an assertion, and before all, no “immediate certainty.” In the long run, this “it thinks” is already too much—the “it” already contains an *interpretation* of the process and does not belong to the process itself. One infers here according to the grammatical usage: “Thinking is an activity; every activity belongs to something, the activity is, consequently—”

-Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (KGA, VI/II: 24)

Insofar as the type of being that we are is fundamentally determined as ecstatic, i.e., insofar as my identity is constituted first and foremost by the relationship I have to that which is not, insofar as identity needs difference, gigantic ramifications emerge with regards to the way in which we must think. Heidegger is first and foremost a thinker of responsiveness, and to think phenomenologically for Heidegger means to respond to the givenness of things. My thinking always emerges only in response to what is given to me to think, and even if that which is given, and the giving of it, are an-archic, this does not mean that I can readily find myself thinking outside of it. In fact doing so, or at least desiring to do so, may be a desire for the impossible. Heidegger’s understanding of phenomenology rests on the presupposition that we, for the most part, take for granted the givenness of the world that we live in. We tarry with what is given, put it to work, and live within a world while rarely noting or asking about the fact that things are given to us to use, or even less, to think about. Richard Polt explains, “we are primally familiar with the whole; we inhabit it.

It is our own in the sense that we are comfortable in it, as a fish is comfortable in the sea. But this is why we cannot recognize it *as* our own, any more than a fish can recognize that it belongs to the sea and not on land” (Polt, 2006: 25). Only when something interrupts our normal manner of proceeding in the world are we able to investigate the givenness of the world as such, rather than what is given. This move backwards towards investigating the givenness of things is the first step of the phenomenological process for Heidegger, yet I must establish more clearly the importance of this notion of the ‘given’ character of the world prior to investigating Heidegger’s uptake of phenomenology.

Let me begin with a brief foray into the *Letter on “Humanism”*. Here, Heidegger writes, “Thinking...lets itself be taken by being in order to be able to say the truth of being. Thinking accomplishes this letting” (GA9, 313). In this same text—the *Letter on “Humanism”*—Heidegger will go onto say, “The history of being is never past but always stands before us. The history of being sustains and determines every *condition et situation humaine*” (GA9, 314). Given that the most basic understanding of phenomenology may not be in accord with this sense of thinking *qua* response to what is given, I want to elucidate why it is reasonable on Heidegger’s terms to claim that he remains phenomenological.

The view of Heidegger as phenomenologist is not original, though that is not to say it is uncontested. Reiner Schürmann writes, “Throughout his texts, the essential concern in Heidegger’s thinking remains the same: to understand ‘being’ phenomenologically as presencing, and to understand it through the manifold modes that entities have of rendering themselves “dense,” of ordering themselves, of constituting a text or a poem” (Schürmann,

1990: 12).⁹ Yet, if Schürmann is right, we are fairly far afield from the usual object—entities encountered after the phenomenological reduction in their stasis or *eidos*—that defines the movement of phenomenology. The question of this shift will provide us with our question for a remainder of the chapter.

Let me begin again with another question: What is so phenomenological about ecstatic thinking—particularly if we take Nietzsche’s thought seriously, as, is it not the case that phenomenology requires an active, self-possessed subject to undertake it? Is not thinking, even ecstatic thinking, in some way the work, the activity, of an agent? I want to argue against this view, and articulate that a true phenomenology that engages the self-showing of the world requires a sense of the ecstatic, as otherwise, we are not actually obeying the fundamental phenomenological *ethos*, we are not attuned to the way in which things, including the self to which things are shown, show themselves. This is thus not to say that there is no such thing as a phenomenologist, rather, it is to say that the process of phenomenological engagement for Heidegger is excessive to any simple distinction between subject and object.

Insofar as we take the basic demand of phenomenology to be the assertion that we “let that which shows itself be seen from itself just as it shows itself from itself” (Heidegger, 1966: 46), it is clear that this demand from *Being and Time*, is still present in Heidegger’s later works. In fact, we encounter a very similar formulation at the beginning of the *Letter on “Humanism”*, where Heidegger writes—to repeat, “Thinking...lets itself be taken by being in order to be able to say the truth of being. Thinking accomplishes this letting” (GA9, 313).

⁹ Schürmann will go on to articulate how the object—if that word can hold its significance for Heidegger—changes throughout what Schürmann sees as the three eras of Heidegger’s thinking: the meaning of being, the truth of being, and the topology of being.

To understand the relationship between this demand to let beings be and the phenomenological imperative, we must understand what exactly is at stake for Heidegger in this sense of accomplishment. Prior to this quotation Heidegger just finished explaining that to accomplish something is not to take part in a spontaneous act, a creation *ex nihilo*, but rather to accomplish something is to let that thing unfold. Hence he writes, “Only what already is, is properly accomplishable” (GA9, 313). Of course, we as Da-sein do not encounter being as such; we encounter beings. It is through this encounter with beings, those things which *weset*, essentially occur, that we come into relation to being thought in its simultaneously substantive and verbal form. This encounter insofar as it is a thoughtful (and we have yet to explore what this means) lets being be said, lets being come to fruition by establishing the relationship between Da-sein, the t/here of being, and being.

Let me take a step into terrain that has thus far gone uninvestigated in order to attempt to situate Heidegger’s understanding of phenomenology—and accordingly the way in which I am using the term throughout this project—from Heidegger’s understanding and criticism of Husserlian phenomenology. In *Ideas Towards a Pure Phenomenology and a Phenomenological Philosophy*, Husserl writes, “Any possible object, logically speaking, “*any subject of possible true predications*”, has *its* ways, before all predicative thinking, precisely in a representing, an intuiting that encounters it in its “incarnate selfhood,” which “seizes upon” it” (Husserl, 1950: 15). This activity of representing or intuiting the object by empirical or eidetic science is the act of the subject, the activity of the bracketing of the particular and encountering the eidetic essence in its unconditional universality. Elsewhere Husserl will say, “the *specifically phenomenological* consists in the consideration of essences which places us in the intentionally all encompassing consciousness which thus *relates everything that arises from*

eidetic consideration to the eidetic essence of consciousness in which all being is constituted” (Keller, 1999: 119).¹⁰ We should already note one major point of difference between Husserl and what I have attempted to lay out thus far regarding Heidegger. While Husserl wants to reject the I in a certain sense—he will call into question the I as it functions in “personal association” and society—he does maintain the pure *Ich*, the pure I, as the undergirding of phenomenology. The fact that all eidetic essences are related back to consciousness by consciousness, demonstrates the grounding role that a certain sense of the I plays for Husserl. He writes, “the pure I would, however, seem to be something principally *necessary*; and, as something absolutely identical throughout every actual or possible change in experience, it *cannot in any sense hold as real part or moment* of the experiences themselves” (Husserl, 1950: 138). Husserl immediately goes on to equate this ego to Kant’s transcendental unity of apperception, quoting Kant saying, “The ‘*I Think*’ must be able to accompany all my representations” (Husserl, 1950: 139). Regardless of how far this ‘I’ is from the masterful I as agent for Husserl, even if, as Joseph Kockelmans explains, there is a recoil of the phenomenological reduction on the subject which “reduces the psychologically purified subjectivity to ‘transcendental subjectivity’” (Kockelmans, 1967: 19), this recoil will not be sufficiently radical for Heidegger, as he makes clear in *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, which will be discussed momentarily.

Jean-Luc Marion makes this fundamental difference between Husserl and Heidegger quite clear in a particularly interesting manner that will be returned to later in this project.

¹⁰ Keller uses this quote as an example of Husserl’s ambiguity about the relationship between phenomenological and eidetic reduction. While Husserl wants to separate them and say that there is something crucial about facticity which is not ignored and closed off in the phenomenological reduction, Keller indicts Husserl for privileging the eidetic and thus moving towards general classes and genuses and thus ignoring factual individuals. On a cursory reading, Heidegger certainly gets some mileage out of such an interpretation as we shall see in a few pages when he specifically rejects the idea that Dasein could be taken as having an *eidōs* at the beginning of *Being and Time*.

Referring to Heidegger's *What is Metaphysics?*, he explains, "when through anxiety or any other fundamental affective mood, the world of being recedes and vanishes, what still speaks has a name—the fact of being, *that* being is." Marion explains that Heidegger refers to this as the "wonder of all wonders," whereas, "Husserl recognizes [the phenomenon par excellence] in the *I*, whose pure consciousness defines an original region that is absolutely distinct from the region of the world and from its objects precisely because it constitutes them" (Marion, 1998: 163).¹¹

If we accept Heidegger's reading of Husserl¹², the latter thinker's phenomenological project leaves us a long way from thinking as fundamentally responsive activity. In fact, it seems as though the activity which Husserl is calling for, the reflective and abstractive activity of the subject, is completely antithetical to Heideggerian phenomenology. And on the surface this may be the case—and we may have to split the difference here, forgoing a more thorough investigation of the relationship between Husserl and Heidegger, given that this is not a project on their relationship. Yet, for Heidegger the only truly phenomenological comportment is one which, as I have said, is attuned to the lack of transparency of the subject—the agent—of phenomenology itself. And insofar as Husserl does maintain a kind of transcendental idealism wherein the subject constitutes the world, it is unclear to me as to

¹¹ Yet as Marion explains, problematizing Heidegger's account of Husserl, not even the *I*, the wonder of all wonders, is safe from reduction. He writes, "The phenomenological method never stumbles upon the slightest limit or border—not even the Being of beings, nor even (contrary to what Heidegger leaves one to suppose) the *I*" (Marion, 1998: 164).

¹² I specify that I am dealing with Heidegger's understanding of Husserl here to attempt to avoid the inevitable criticism that this reading does not give Husserl a fair shake. While this may well be the case, as is made apparent by numerous interpretations of Husserl—already in Eugen Fink's work for example—and even in the wide variance of views that Husserl himself displays from the *Logical Investigations* up through the *Crisis of the Modern European Sciences* with regards to his relationship to transcendental idealism and the Kantian transcendental unity of apperception, I am limiting my task to elucidating how Heidegger takes up Husserl on this issue of the agent of phenomenology and the reflexive recoiling—not reflective—move that phenomenology must make on its practitioner.

whether or not he was willing to think the consequences of his phenomenological project radically enough. As Heidegger will say, a real question puts the questioner herself at stake—and unless this move is made, phenomenology has not become radical enough.

On Francoise Dastur's account, the distinction between Heidegger's conception of the phenomenologist and that of Husserl can largely be explained by their relationship to time. Affirming the impact that Heidegger's thinking of ecstasy has on the status of Da-sein as a subject, she writes, "with respect to time, Husserl continues to see it as something immanent or internal to the subject, while for Heidegger the issue is instead to think the "subject" itself as time" (Dastur, 1998: 8). I believe that this seemingly subtle distinction can in fact account for the primary differences between Heidegger and Husserl in their respective conceptions of phenomenology. Husserl does not exclude the phenomenologist from phenomenological investigation, in fact he insists that it is a necessity (Husserl, 1950: 154). Yet the undertaking of this self-investigation is not radical enough for Heidegger, so long as the transcendental I is left standing. Its certitude is guaranteed, if nowhere else, in the fact that Husserl discusses the eidetic essence of consciousness, implying that even if we do fundamentally engage individuals in their facticity, there is a deeper essential level available to us if we were to go through with the phenomenological (and eidetic) reduction(s). In light of Heidegger's conception of Da-sein *as* temporality, such an essential, universal, eidetic level becomes unthinkable.¹³

¹³ For the sake of brevity, I have focused on the status of the I in phenomenological analysis, yet Heidegger's critique of Husserl actually begins with a critique of the Husserl's understanding of the meaning of expressions with regards to a particular object. Husserl holds that while any particular thought can be expressed in a many ways, the meaning will always stay the same, and it is this universal meaning that is sought in phenomenological investigation. In the *Prolegomena to the History of the Concept of Time*, Heidegger claims that Husserl's phenomenology, insofar as it is based on the method of reduction, "not only abandons reality, but also abandons the particular separating out of experience. It thereby abandons the fact that an act is mine or that

In *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger gives a concise explanation of how he sees his project relating to Husserl on this point regarding the phenomenological reduction.

He writes:

For Husserl, phenomenological reduction, which he explicitly worked out for the first time in the *Ideas Towards a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* is the method of repatriating phenomenological vision from the natural attitude of the human whose life is involved in the world of things and persons back to the transcendental life of consciousness and its noetic-noematic experiences, in which object are constituted as correlates of consciousness. *For us* phenomenological reduction means repatriating phenomenological vision back from the as always determinate comprehension of a being to the understanding of the being of this being (projecting upon its ways of unconcealment) (GA24, 29).

Heidegger's explanation of Husserl reiterates what I have set up this far: the transcendental life of consciousness, while in question, is still the fundamental undergirding of the project. Heidegger thinks that the reduction means making the move away from the way in which we encounter a being as a static entity and focusing instead on the way in which the being discloses itself—its manner of occurring or taking place. This sense of reduction does not move us away from the entity in question, rather, it takes us deeper into the way into which the entity *west*, essentially occurs—that is we make a move to its being. The engagement has now become ontological.

Given Heidegger's explanation in *Being and Time* that Da-sein itself is what is to be interrogated if we are to do phenomenology as fundamental ontology, it ought to be clear that there is no possibility of positing a concrete, guaranteed, grounding function to Da-sein as the phenomenologist anymore than one could inquire into the persistent essence of beings which exceeds their existence as a temporal occurrence (Heidegger, 1966: 18). In *Being and Time*, he is fundamentally concerned with the way in which Da-sein occurs as its

acts are of another individual human being, and views them only according to their *what*' (GA20, 151). I will return to this theme in the body of the text momentarily.

possibilities, i.e. in its questionability. Da-sein does not have an essence which could be reached via an eidetic reduction—hence we read, “the title ‘Da-sein’, with which we refer to this being, does not describe its ‘what’, as in the case of a table, house, or tree, but rather its being” (Heidegger, 1966: 56). Heidegger’s rejection of the analytic of Da-sein as being an investigation into the ‘what’ of Da-sein should be heard here as a rejection of an attempt to think of Da-sein in terms of its essence, which Heidegger elsewhere correlates with a things “whatness” (GA24, 20). This rejection of the investigation into the essence of Da-sein has already been presaged in Heidegger’s rejection of thinking humans as the *animal rationale* in the *Letter on “Humanism”*—no such essence from all time will do for Heidegger, insofar as essence can only be thought in terms of temporal unfolding as essential occurrence, i.e. *wesen* as a verb, and no longer a noun. And here we must recall that Da-sein is its temporality, and temporality is not. Da-sein’s essence as its whatness—if it is to exist at all—lies in how it occurs, how it *zeitigt*, temporalizes or blossoms. To proceed otherwise, to think of *Wesen* as *Was-Sein*, the “what-of-being”, falls into the trap of determining being’s manner of presencing in advance. Gadamer is helpful here:

What shows itself as here as *eidos*, i.e. as an unchangeable determinateness showing its what-being [*Was-Seins*], implicitly understands ‘being’ as a continuous presence [*Gegenwart*], and this determines as well the meaning of unconcealedness, that is, of truth, and establishes the criterion of right and wrong for every essential assertion about beings. (Gadamer, 1987: 240)

Thus, to think that by returning to things in their constant presence via an eidetic reduction, i.e. to encounter the truth of a thing beyond its historical or temporal situatedness, is to do nothing but enforce a particular historical determination and interpretation of being and in no way asks the question of the way in which being presences.

With this in mind let us follow Heidegger further in his critiques which are both explicit and implicit. Dispelling the possibility that Da-sein could be thought of as having an essence as a type of “whatness” Heidegger says that Da-sein cannot be thought of as an instance of a genus—rather the only way to approach Da-sein is in terms of its *Jemeinigkeit*, its mineness, in each and every case. These passages could be heard as an act of undercutting the possibility of making phenomenology reflect upon the phenomenologist as if the phenomenologist *qua* Da-sein had some kind of stable basis which we could inquire into and find the truth of. For Heidegger, there is no fundamental basis—no *Grund* of Da-sein, and this is why I have said that the movement of phenomenology is a reflexive recoiling, not a moment of reflection into an essence. Heidegger’s discussion of Da-sein as defined in its ecstatic character—both spatially and temporally does nothing but make this point even clearer.¹⁴ The essence of Da-sein is constituted in its being-outside-of-itself—and thus, there is no essence that could ever be brought to light other than through an engagement with Da-sein’s existence as occurrence.

Heidegger goes on in the *Basic Problems* to explain that the reduction is not the entirety of the project of phenomenology—in fact, it is only one portion of what he lays out as the tri-partite structure; the other two being phenomenological construction and destruction. Heidegger characterizes construction as free projection into being itself. For him this is the positive moment that follows out of the negative moment of the reduction. Given the process of reductions which must take place to find an object as it shows itself

¹⁴ I thus agree with Alejandro Vallega’s reading of *Being and Time*—and Heidegger’s work in general—insofar as Vallega sees Heidegger’s thought as fundamentally exilic, i.e. in exile. The accord with my above exploration is to say that Dasein as a being is fundamentally in exile, that is a being that experiences itself as fundamentally without origin. For Vallega exilic thought “indicates a thought that cannot return to unchanging origins or principles in order to find its sense of being” (Vallega, 2003: 7).

above and beyond the horizontal frame out of which it shines, phenomenology is simultaneously the activity of undercutting and re-establishing the identity of an object. We realize that though we may reflectively be able to take an object out of its context and thereby posit some kind of reductive relationship which supercedes the givenness of the empirical object, this is not an encounter with the actual self showing of the thing, but rather with the activity of taking something as *Vorhanden*, or present-at-hand. To do so drags us away from the thing as such, and into a reflective remove from the self-presentation of an object. For Heidegger, the way an object is given is fundamentally in its reference to the totality to which it belongs, and it is primarily in this referential totality that we first encounter and understand objects. This relationship to things becomes more and more primordial the more we engage objects in their *Handlichkeit*—their handiness (Heidegger, 1996: 93). But this increased level of primordality could only be used to describe an engagement with beings that investigated this referential totality in terms of the way in which being presences as the *Sinn* of that totality. John Sallis explains, “the sight which is operative in one’s dealings with the ready-to-hand is a sight by which is held in view a referential totality correlative to projective understanding; it is a sight which to that extent is grounded in understanding and correspondingly is remote from immediate intuition” (Sallis, 1995: 80). Given that Heidegger was to explore phenomenological construction in part three of *Basic Problems*—which was never presented—this seems to me to encapsulate what he has in mind with the sense of construction as free projection laid out earlier in the text. Construction as free projection is the movement towards the handiness of things in their referential totality—insofar as this projection has taken upon itself the project of understanding the ontological structure of those beings which were initially encountered as ontically given, or

understand “pre-ontologically”, prior to the movement of reduction. The act of construction thus places the being back into its referential totality but with a new richer sense of its being after the removal of it in reduction.

Heidegger characterizes the third aspect of the tri-partite structure of phenomenology—destruction—as “a critical deconstruction [*Abbau*] that overcomes concepts that are necessarily used at first, and the source from which these concepts are acquired. Ontology can first be certain of the phenomenological genuineness of its concepts through destruction [*Destruktion*]” (GA24, 31). This destruction will allow us to investigate the ways in which our world as referential totality is given to us—and what the categories we inherit may conceal whilst they reveal. This is what Schürmann has in mind when he speaks of a phenomenology of being’s presencing—how do the referential totalities that we return to in an ontological manner during the course of construction tell us about how being presences in a particular epochal domain? And here we can begin to see the need for this engagement with history. Steven Galt Crowell explains: “in a historico-hermeneutic move that has little parallel in the more positivistic phenomenology of Husserl, the phenomenological method of *Being and Time* requires reflection on the history of philosophy...to deconstruct categories that, in the present, conspire to veil the phenomena to which an inquiry into the meaning of being must attend” (Crowell, 2001: 208).¹⁵ Though at present, I am not interested in a thorough investigation of the way in which Heidegger attends to the history of ontology in either *Being and Time* or in *Basic Problems*, the manner in

¹⁵ For example, in the *Logical Investigations* Husserl writes, “No truth is a fact, i.e., something determined as to time. A truth can indeed have as its meaning that something is, that a state exists, that a change is going on etc. The truth itself is, however, raised above time: i.e. it makes no sense to attribute temporal being to it, nor to say that it arises or perishes (Husserl, 1970: 109-110). For Husserl the meaning of the utterance of a truth, in the *Logical Investigations*, may change depending on its context, but the truth as such abides across all temporal determinations. I think Heidegger will refuse to grant such a distinction.

which he attends to the question seems less important to my point than does the fact that he attends at all. Heidegger's focus upon the history of ontology—later *die Geschichte des Seyns*, the history of being—demonstrates his move away from any sense of the essential constitution of things, and a move towards—as he says in *Basic Problems*—the manner in which being discloses itself via the occurrence of beings, which is always going to be historical, just as it always going to occur in a world, i.e., a referential totality. The historically situated character of any and all objects thus only further serves to problematize the possibility of thinking that the activity of reduction could somehow or other bring us to an experience of the essence of some object—as that meaning and essence of that object is only in a referential totality which itself is only to be found in history. The most important conclusion to be drawn from this is that the meaning or sense of any particular entity is just as determined by its spatial ecstasy—in the form of its placement in referential totality—and by its temporal ecstasy, i.e. its place in history, as is the being of Da-sein.

To quickly recapitulate these three movements of phenomenology: First, reduction moves from the ontical givenness of an object and encounters it in its being. Second, construction returns this object once “ontologized” back into the referential totality out of which it has been abstracted, and without which it is meaningless. But now, this totality is encountered ontologically, so that what is at stake in viewing it as such is the manner in which this totality shows the phenomenologist the presencing of being. Yet this presencing occurs historically—accordingly we must begin the destructive investigation of the history of philosophy in order to encounter the manner in which this presencing has changed and transformed throughout history. In doing so we discover that manifestation is founded upon nothing, i.e. being is nothing but presencing, and as Schürmann explains,

“manifestation founds nothing. It is therefore gained at the cost of deconstructing historical presence or ‘being manifest’. From the situated entities, to their site, then to the situating—the emerging into the open, presencing—the transcendental retrogradation [of hermeneutic phenomenology] is deconstructive essentially” (Schürmann, 1992: 20). This tripartite structure will repeat itself again and again in Heidegger, even once the language of phenomenology has disappeared.

Section IV **Moving to the Middle Voice**

Following Schürmann, the irony is thus that phenomenology demonstrates that nothing is given to us in immediate, isolated intuition—and accordingly and bracketing which tries to get us there does not attend to the self-showing of an object. Rather, as Sallis explains, a thing shows itself in a manner that demonstrates its lack of “persistent self-sameness, as enduring presence to intuition, as the permanent possibility of presenting itself intuitively throughout all structural variations” (Sallis, 1995: 81). Why? Because, the manner in which a thing is shown to us in its givenness is always already determined by the way in which it inheres in a world, in a referential totality. Accordingly, the identity of a given entity is not permanent; it does inhere in any essence that we could come into contact with via eidetic sciences. Thus the thing of the “to the things themselves!” of phenomenology is always still a question—a question which Heidegger returns to engage explicitly in *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking*—and only insofar as the move is made in which phenomenology recognizes this fact about the conditions of the self-showing of things—that not just subjects, but also things are always ecstatic and determined

accordingly—can phenomenology continue. In fact, I would argue that it is only here that phenomenology can truly begin.¹⁶

Thus for Heidegger the phenomenological character of thinking occurs insofar as we understand that thinking fundamentally takes place in the moment wherein *Da-sein* lets itself be claimed by the way in which a thing and its whole accompanying referential totality show themselves to us. This claim of being is the *Anspruch*, the address; it is not found or sought out by an active, isolated, self-possessed subject. One must be receptive to the address insofar as one is going to be able to bring it to word. Accordingly, the most important facet of what is at stake for thinking is that it *lets itself be addressed*—and here we can see and hear the resonance of Heidegger’s determination of the temporal ecstasy of the present as *Begegnenslassens von*, that is, letting oneself be met by that which shows itself. Things must show themselves to us so that we can begin to engage them at all. Thinking, in this sense, is always a response to that which is given to us to think. Thinking is not a moment of action conceived of as a making. I do not create my own thoughts, nor do I create the matter (*die Sache*) that is at stake for me in my thoughts. This is the weight of the quote from Nietzsche with which I began this section. It is the prejudice of the philosopher to think that we are somehow or other responsible for the generation of our thoughts, when it is in fact clear, from a phenomenological perspective, that prior to the coherency of the *cogito*, we find ourselves thinking—unaware from where this thinking came. The matter which is given to us to think seems to necessarily precede our thinking of it. The problem with maintaining

¹⁶ John Sallis says that it is only through such a reconfiguration of identity that “it become[s] possible to reconstitute phenomenology at the edge of metaphysics.” (Sallis, 1995: 82) While I am not one to bicker, I would want to say—as ought to be clear by now—that I believe that it is only here that phenomenology can be constituted at all. This is not a moment of reconstitution but initiation. A phenomenology which is to be true to the self-showing of things must always attend to the ecstatic character of all things—only here are things actually showing themselves.

the term phenomenology, however, is that it is often connected with the continuation of the project of transcendental philosophy which attempts to attribute all acts of consciousness to an intending subject—even if this subject is a vague and elusive variant of Kant's transcendental unity of apperception. What I have argued is that phenomenology which remains true to its *ethos* will not attempt to posit something which falls back into the prejudice that Nietzsche diagnosed. Rather, phenomenology ought to acknowledge the lack of mastery and the *post facto* character of all ownership with regards to our thoughts.

All of this, however, is not to say that thinking, for Heidegger, is passive, or that true phenomenology does not have a subject which undertakes it. Rather, I must comport myself in such a way, in a sense in the middle voice, which is neither passive nor active, to let myself be claimed. I must let things show themselves, this is the true task of the phenomenologist. In a sense, the passive stance and the active stance are both subject to the same concerns. The active stance can delimit the self-showing of objects before it ever takes place—which does nothing to negate the fact that my thinking is fundamentally a response, but can make it such that I am in no way receptive to the ways in which things show themselves and insist that they conform to a certain set of norms and standards that are given to me as the appropriate way of engaging the world around me. This is the concern with regards to representational thinking, for example. I can take the world as object, over and against myself as subject, but this is to conceal the basic mode of disclosure of being.

Engaging the world passively seems to suffer from the same concern, as it is likely that I will unintentionally enact the same concealing as that which is generated by a purely active engagement, insofar as the 'I' never merely find myself in a world without being given a basic mode of interpreting beings handed over to me by that world. Hence, in our

contemporary world which is dominated by calculative thinking, I will inevitably take the world as already chopped up and delimited without intending to do so—stepping out beyond this is the hard part. The middle voice is a strenuous position to adopt, as it is an attempt to grasp the ways in which things show themselves outside of the historical frameworks which all epochs impose upon them—in fact Schürmann wants to argue that this may not just be strenuous, but may be one of the fundamentally reasons why he and others encounter human life as a fundamentally tragic phenomena. To not yet close the question, the middle voice is, in a sense, the most active and strenuous of all relations one can adopt towards beings, as it requires that one attempt to break outside of the frameworks which are given to us by the world which we inhabit in order to let beings be. Thus they will assert themselves in a manner that is appropriate to them and not to our specific framework, which in the modern world happens to be conceptual. The task of thinking is to engage the way in which interpretations of beings take place from out of epochal-linguistic determinations which are incapable of questioning their own constitution. The task of thinking as this letting beings be is to ask about the very constitution, the grounding of these delimitations, so as to attempt to bring us to the brink of their own unquestioned moments of delimitation to begin the process of thinking beyond them. This is precisely what this middle voice moment, this active receptivity, attempts to do outside of the bounds of the active and the passive.

The phenomenological character of thinking is thus the active receptivity of thinking to what is given to it to be thought. Thinking is letting what is given to be thought show itself in a manner which is appropriate to it—a manner which presumably cannot be sufficiently elucidated or encapsulated by any one worldview or delimited manner of

grasping beings. If we are to engage the world from within any particular given framework, unquestioningly so, we end up receiving things in a way that is already determined for us. Our domain of objects is already delimited before we even begin investigating. Such a thinking must attempt to bring us to the limits of these delimiting moments of any specific domain of inquiry, to encounter how being presences (*Anwesen*) in any particular present (*Gegenwart*). In the language of *Being and Time*, it makes us think about why we apprehend beings in the manner which we do, insofar as we do this apprehending theoretically. Assuming that this clarifies what exactly is at stake, at the most basic level, for a thinking to be phenomenological, let us recap why such a thinking requires and yields the type of ecstasy which we have been thematizing for the last two chapters.

The necessity to understand a phenomenological engagement with the world as fundamentally ecstatic is already implicit in an interpretation of *Da-sein* as fundamentally *In-der-Welt-Sein*, being-in-the-world. As has been said, *Da-sein* occurs as the making room for others, but its occurrence is possible only insofar as it is constituted by that which it makes room for. We have a relationship of reciprocal constitution. The activity of the phenomenologist can only truly commence once she or he is willing to get beyond her or his own sense of mastery and her or his belief that thinking is the *Grundsetzung* of the world. We do not lie as the *subiectum* of the world for Heidegger, nor are we fundamentally apart from it. We can thus begin to see why even our thinking as phenomenological is what it is only because we are ecstatic, because we always already *have* and are amidst (*bei*) a world, our relationship to which constitutes the very character of *Da-sein's* ek-sistence. Andrew Mitchell writes, "To step over something...there must be room for movement, an openness that in some sense precedes the overstepping and makes it possible. Precisely this open expanse

remains unthought within representational thinking” (Mitchell, 2002: 325). Is this openness which precedes and grants the possibility of our ecstatic movement our world? This may seem to be the case, insofar as our having a world, as our belonging to the world seems to condition the fact that we are given anything to think at all. Nevertheless it is not clear that the openness which Mitchell is pointing to here can be exhausted by talking about our *Lebenswelt*—lifeworld—as our horizon of knowing and it certainly cannot be thought in terms of geometric space. Taking this openness into which we stand as Da-sein—or the space which we are as the t/here of being, i.e. Da-sein—as geometric would be to think of this space in terms of the pure and ideal presence constitutive of a metaphysical understanding of space. Rather Heidegger wants to push this question deeper, to what in *The Prolegomena of the History of the Concept of Time*, he calls “a more originary spatiality” (GA20, 56). This more originary sense of spatiality is described by Vallega as “dasein’s spatiality or the spatiality of the appearing of events of being” (Vallega, 2003: 67). What is the spatial character of Da-sein’s *Da*, and how does it relate to any particular interpretation of space, such as that of geometric space? This is what we must begin to investigate—however we will not do so directly, rather we will do so through an interrogation of Heidegger’s sense of thinking.

Given the potential variability of the identity of any thing which can be taken upon phenomenologically, we may want to start asking about the way in which various referential totalities are determined. If we do not give our world the meaning that it has, if we do not structure our world into this referential totality, is there an agent of this activity? From whence does this structuring come and to where does it go insofar as we note that things can have variable meanings or senses, even in their handiness? If phenomenology encounters

things in their variable identity in relationship to a particular determination of that totality, what does this tell us about being as such? Phenomenology does not stop here, settled and satisfied with an awareness of the handiness of things in a particular arrangement. Rather, what I will begin to investigate is how phenomenological activity is in and of itself a process of freeing, insofar as it undercuts the apparent solidity and selfsameness of any identity. In this process, phenomenology itself becomes an experience of freedom, in the form of the exposure of the absolute contingency of any given determination of a referential totality of beings, and this happens through an encounter with that sense of the *Da* which points to a space beyond and excessive to spatiality. I want to argue that this space speaks in the *es* of the ever problematic *es gibt Sein*, i.e., there is/it gives being.

If these beings could be arranged otherwise, and thus the *Sinn*—thought in the words multiplicity as meaning, sense, and direction--of our world could be entirely different, how does this impact the way in which our world unfolds for us? Does this bring us to a new kind of lightness? Or does this bring us to a new kind of gravity? Given Heidegger's analysis of the first and the other beginning in the *Beiträge* and other texts from the late 1930s, I would like to claim that this experience of the contingency of things brings us to both an experience of openness and possibility in the form of the *thaumazein*, wonder, and simultaneously an experience of *Erschrecken*, terror. This experience of freedom will always have a pharmacological character—as contingency will always produce both possibility and uncertainty, even horror. Yet for now let us be satisfied with these early gestures, as in the next chapter we will explore these consequences more fully in relationship to Heidegger's later works, and the encounter with another moment of levity—*die Lichtung*, or the clearing,

and its relationship to the giving of being. Only from there we will be able to explore more fully the sense of freedom at play in Heidegger's corpus.

CHAPTER III

THE FREEDOM OF THE CLEARING: THINKING IN THE BEGINNING(S)

The previous chapter attempted to lay the groundwork for a rigorous thinking of freedom in Heidegger through a confrontation with the reconfiguration of phenomenology that takes place in light of Heidegger's thinking of Dasein's temporal and spatial ecstasies. In this chapter I will follow out the consequences of Chapter I in three sections. Section one will explore the way ecstatic thinking asserts itself in Heidegger's later writings, especially in *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking*, wherein the latter term is most explicitly determined in his critiques of his earlier phenomenological works. I will focus and continue to discuss the function the *es gibt* plays as a provocation for thought—particularly in light of the discussion of a more originary spatiality in the previous chapter, and Heidegger's claim about the unthought element of the call “to the things themselves!” My claim is that all thinking, insofar as it enacts the tripartite structure of phenomenology, is essentially the thinking of the clearing, *das Denken der Lichtung*—a genitive which must be encountered as double; thus a genitive which problematizes the agent and object for thought.

We will thus grapple both directly and indirectly with Heidegger's claim from the beginning of the *Beiträge* that, “because of that which philosophy takes as what is to be known at all times in simultaneity—being-human in its standing in the truth, truth itself and thus the relation to beyng—displacement comes and no representation of something present is possible, the thinking of philosophy remains foreign” (GA65, 14). What is thinking if is

not thinking of something present, an existent? From here we will move into the second section of this chapter where we will discuss how such thinking is a freeing; or, to say it otherwise, an experience of freedom. I will elucidate and defend that freedom as the realization of the lack of necessity of any particular epochal determination of being, as the experience of possibility through contingency, is what emerges for us in the experience of thinking the clearing. To get at this point with sufficient poignancy it will be necessary to think through quite carefully the role that history plays for Heidegger in relationship to what he calls words for being and the first beginning of philosophy as metaphysics. Then, in section three, we will explore the relationship between the lack of a word for being and the thinkability of the clearing in some detail in order to ask whether or not the clearing, insofar as it is precisely that which escapes and grants the possibility of thinking things which are extant, is only thinkable under the name *Ereignis*—which is not a new name for being—via *Gelassenheit* thought of as a particular kind of comportment, that which is proper to thinking, when all our other words break. Here we will encounter intimations of what Heidegger calls “the other beginning,” the experience that we have in the face of the abyssal character of things insofar as we do not attempt to stop-gap this abyss with a new principle or name for being, either wonder or terror.

Finally we will begin to think through the relationship between the first and the other beginning in order to further the move towards that other beginning which is only intimated. The chapter will close with a litany of questions which will provoke and sustain our move into the next chapter wherein we will begin investigating the role of what Schelling calls the *Unvordenklichkeit des Seyns* or the *nie aufgehende Rest*, in relationship to *Ereignis* and *Lichtung*. This will hopefully begin to take us through the movement from *Erstaunen*—or *thaumazein*,

wonder or astonishment—as the *Stimmung* of the first beginning towards “fright, restraint, and reverential awe (*Erschrecken, die Verhaltenheit, die Scheu*). Together these constitute the foreboding (*die Abnung*), that anticipates being as the event of an *agôn* or a *polemos* turned against itself” (Schürmann, 2003: 527). This torsion and tension—this turning against—will lead us into Chapter III where we will begin to confront Schelling’s *Ages of the World*.

Section I *Das Denken der Lichtung*

We concluded the last chapter with an investigation of the way in which our being-in-the-world determines, precedes, and makes possible phenomenological investigation in *Being and Time*. Yet we have not rigorously investigated the ways in which this same sort of engagement comes to the fore in Heidegger’s turn towards thinking—at least on his own terms. In *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking*, Heidegger writes, “metaphysical thinking, starting from what is present, represents it in its presence and thus exhibits it as grounded by its ground” (Heidegger, 1988: 61). Elsewhere, Heidegger refers to this same thinking as onto-theology, i.e., the quest undertaken by metaphysics to discover that which could be defined as that which “unifies as the ground which brings forth” (Heidegger, 2002: 121). It should be clear from the previous chapter that I do not think that Heidegger’s phenomenology necessarily functions as such a move—particularly as the meaning of being which was sought in *Being and Time* is described as temporality, which *is not*, but rather temporalizes or blossoms. We have no ground that has being—which persists—in Heidegger’s explicitly phenomenological writings, nevertheless he expresses dissatisfaction with these undertakings. Why?

In the *End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking*, Heidegger writes that “it is necessary to question what remains unthought in the call “to the thing itself”” (Heidegger, 1988: 71). If this is the task of thinking, then we can see why Heidegger may say that *Being and Time*’s phenomenological investigation did not go far enough, but this is not to say that phenomenology itself must be abandoned—particularly given the restatement of the tripartite structure of phenomenology we find in *Basic Problems*. This is something we have already considered thoroughly and will return to again. Let us leave fighting with Heidegger about his self-interpretation to the side and follow his thinking in this essay.

That which remains unthought within the call of ‘to the things themselves’ is precisely that which permits the self-showing of these objects. What else must be there for things to appear to us as *phainomena*? Heidegger notes two things—the light in which shines on them and the space into this light can shine. He writes:

Such appearance [*Scheinen*] necessarily occurs in some brightness. Only through this brightness can what shines show itself, i.e., shine. But brightness in its turn depends upon something open, something free, which might illuminate it here and there, now and then. Brightness plays in the open and battles there with darkness. (Heidegger, 1988: 71)

For something to show itself, to come to presence, it is required that there is an openness which “already rules”—the region of openness must always already be in play such that things can appear. This openness, this free region, this clearing (*die Lichtung*) is not something which we can encounter as a phenomena, rather it is what grants us the possibility of encountering something as a phenomena at all. For Heidegger, all philosophy insofar as it encounters phenomena—and whether it does so phenomenologically or attempts to determine things in advance conceptually—relies upon and, in some sense, encounters this clearing. “However, philosophy knows nothing of the clearing” (Heidegger, 1988: 73). It

takes for granted the groundedness of the beings it encounters and is not puzzled about this region which grants us the possibility of encountering beings as phenomena, but which is not some existent thing that can be encountered. In fact, attempting to conceive of it as a region, or a space, maybe to move to quickly and to be bound too much within the traditional metaphysical structures of determination—so long as our understanding of space remains governed by a geometric and metaphysical determination. Instead, we may have to hear this as the “more primordial form of spatiality” discussed in the previous chapter.

To justify the previous claim, one need only to look to the very next page of Heidegger’s essay wherein he offers another term by which we can think the clearing. Thus far he has described this space or moment or occurrence which undergirds the phenomenality of all phenomena with the terms, *das Freie*, *das Offene*, and *die Lichtung*—which we encounter in translation as the free region, the open, and the clearing respectively. Heidegger’s addition to this list is *aletheia*—truth as unconcealment. Why does this problematize encountering this *Sache des Denkens* as a region? Because, *aletheia*, unconcealment is not a place, rather it is an occurrence. It cannot be thought geometrically. Elsewhere, Heidegger explains, “This unconcealedness comes about in the unconcealment as a clearing; but this clearing itself, as occurrence, remains unthought in every respect” (GA12, 39). How is this an occurrence and not a state of affairs? As a noun derivative of the Greek verb *aletheuein* which could be translated as ‘to disclose’, we must appreciate the simultaneous verbal and substantive character of this word. John Sallis writes, “*aletheia* would never simply be present as such. This is why the opening to it could never be simply a regress to a more originary origin but rather one in which the very determination of origin—as ground, i.e.

presence, to be itself brought to presence in metaphysics—is eroded, reinscribed as *Grund*” (Sallis, 1990: 37).

In *Intimations of Mortality*, David Farrell Krell explains that *Lichtung* must be thought “as lighting in the sense of clearing, making less heavy or burdensome” (Krell, 1986: 92). We find Krell recounting the difficulty of translating *Lichtung*, he traces the term back to the German verb *lichten* which he explains has two distinct meanings, “two make bright and to illuminate” and “make less heavy or to heave up and carry” (Krell, 1986: 82). Given my previous quotation, we see the way in which this difficulty was resolved. The lighting up, the illuminating first depends upon an occurrence which is the *act of clearing*. Prior to this, the lighting, in the sense of illuminating, cannot occur. Accordingly, there is no way in which we can interpret *Lichtung* as a region, in fact, Krell recounts a conversation with Heidegger wherein he explained that “a number of his translators had been thinking of using the word “opening” to render *Lichtung*, recalling his use of *die offene Gegend, das Offene, and Offenheit*.” Heidegger responds, “No, that is incorrect. The point is that openness is the result of lighting. *Die Lichtung* comes first” (Krell, 1986: 92). Here, the list of nouns that Krell offers as examples of how English speakers had been thinking *Lichtung* seems to be shot down precisely because they attempt to think *Lichtung* as a region, ignoring its character as an occurrence. Therefore, it does not necessarily seem to be the outcome of this quotation from Heidegger that we can no longer think clearing as openness—but we can only engage this list of terms as a series of ‘synonyms’ as Sallis suggests (Sallis, 1995: 120), if we provide a caveat, which is that we must attempt to understand all of these nominal moments as somehow explicitly verbal in character. Therefore, to return to our discussion of *aletheia*, things become unconcealed, they assert themselves in unconcealedness. This is both a

noun—we encounter things as disclosed—and a verb—we encounter things in their disclosing. Heidegger writes, “we must think *aletheia*, unconcealment, as the clearing which first grants being and thinking and their presencing to and for each other” (Heidegger, 1988: 75). Unconcealedness is not a space; if we can think it in terms of nouns at all it is a way of being. It is that which grants to us the possibility of taking things as phenomena.

We have now found ourselves explicitly engaging the problem of the openness which is traversed in Dasein’s ecstasy understood as its character of being-in-the-world that closed our previous chapter. To return to Heidegger’s assertion from the *Prolegomena to the History of the Concept of Time* regarding a more originary or primordial spatiality, we can now see the consequences of this move in a richer frame. During the conjoined process of construction and destruction with regards to a phenomenological engagement with a particular entity, we are led to an encounter not only with the manner in which being presences, i.e., the manner in which being gives itself over to us, but simultaneously to an encounter with the historical contingency of that mode of presencing. For example, the encounter with space as fundamentally geometric space in the form of ideal and constant presence can be called into question through an engagement of the sense of space that presents itself elsewhere in the history of philosophy, i.e., in Plato’s *Timaeus* or Aristotle’s *Physics*. If space presents itself as the ever troubling *chora* or the comparably mysterious *topos*—both determinations which are incommensurable with a Newtonian conception of space—then we encounter the possibility that not only that particular object of inquiry, but the entire domain of objects could present themselves in a different manner. This leads us to ask questions about the relationship between being and these epochal determinations or sendings which we encounter through this investigation into the *Lichtung*. Is being nothing

but how it presences? Is it excessive to these forms? Is this a form/matter distinction? With these questions in mind—not all of which will be responded to explicitly—let us proceed.

In an investigation of Heidegger's *On the Essence of Truth*, Rodolphe Gasché explores this issue of determination/destination (*Bestimmung*), in light of the difficulty Heidegger is investigating regarding attunement (*Stimmung*) and accordance (*Übereinstimmung*). Gasché writes, "All *Stimmen* as *Übereinstimmen* presupposes *Bestimmung* by an order, or more generally, by the possibility of yielding to order" (Gasché, 1999: 34). Thus anything that we can encounter must either already have a place within a world or be encountered as something placeable, or as Gasché says planable, destinal. So long as it can be put to work or given a place it can be assimilated into our domain of objects. Gasché is here playing with the double sense of *bestimmte* as destined and determined—we can destine things for certain ends, which means we can determine them as part of a structure. The claim is thus that we can only encounter existent objects—and that includes objects of thought—as within a particular structure of presentation; a particular mode of presencing. Is there anything excessive to these multitudinous modalities of presencing? Yes, but it is not another entity amidst entities—rather it is precisely the field of openness which Mitchell reminded us of at the end of the previous chapter. But did we not just encounter Krell quoting Heidegger that *die Lichtung* is prior to this open region? What sense of priority are we speaking of here? Is being just unformed matter waiting for its epochal *Bestimmung*? If so, would this not bring us back to a quest for an origin—and not just any origin but that which is excessive to thought? Given John Sallis' interpretation of *aletheia*, the response would seem to be no. But why? We have two problems; the exploration of which may help us to clarify our interpretation:

first, the understanding of priority. And second, the status of being in relationship to its various *Bestimmungen*.

To hear *aletheia*, *das Offene*, *die Lichtung*, or *das Freie*, this region, as an enactment or an occurrence, means to hear it as the *sending* which gives what there is to think. This must stand opposed to an understanding of these terms which would take them to be a site, such as the locale at which being as unformed matter, i.e. as *Bestand*, could be found waiting to be determined and hence to become thinkable. Such thinking is not nearly active enough for Heidegger—that is, it lacks the movement which thinking must engage in insofar as it is to understand all of these various terms in their verbal character. Heidegger writes, “only so long as the clearing of being comes to pass [*ereignet*] does being pass itself on to man. But that the *Da*, the clearing as the truth of being itself, comes to pass [*ereignet*] is the sending of being itself. This is the destiny of the clearing” (GA9, 224). What we have to begin to reckon with is the way in which the *Da*, the ‘ek’ of Da-sein’s ek-sistence is both dependent upon the clearing, and this clearing is itself emergent—only occurs—insofar as humans enter into Da-sein, i.e, insofar as they are ecstatic. Here there can no longer be a transcendental condition of the possibility, we are left with reciprocity—the question of priority thus becomes more difficult, but also breaks us out of a quest for origins. This reciprocal determination of clearing and thinking is what we must begin to think through more carefully to think through the question of priority and of being in-and-out-of determinations. The remainder of this section of this chapter will attempt to deal with the question of priority, the question of being and its *Bestimmungen* will be dealt with in the next two sections of this chapter at length.

Jean-Luc Nancy's *Experience of Freedom* may be helpful while we attempt to think through this sense of reciprocity and the problem of priority. Taking up the task that I put forth for myself, attempting to find where freedom is at play in Heidegger's later work, Nancy writes, "it is no longer a question here of *freedom* as a property or as a power in whatever sense, but of a specific element, 'the free,' which appears as a quality attributed to a substratum, 'the dimension,' only through the banal constraint of language, but which in reality is indistinguishable from this 'dimension'" (Nancy, 1993: 43). This "banal constraint of language," which Nancy points to is precisely what makes thinking the non-regional or non-spatial character of the clearing/free/open/*aletheia* so difficult. We must consider what it would mean to understand the clearing as that which grants us *die Sache* for thought, given the reciprocal relationship between the *Da* of Da-sein and the clearing. To translate *es gibt Denken*, we must be aware of the peculiarity of the status of the way in which German says "There is", to which I have already alluded. There is thinking, also means, quite literally, it gives thinking. Following upon Heidegger's late seminar *Time and Being*, the answer to the question, "what is the it that does the giving?", is the giving itself. In that seminar he writes, "We now cease the attempt, to univocally determine the "It" for itself. But this we must keep in view: The It names, at least in nearest available interpretation, a presence of an absence" (Heidegger, 1988: 18). He explains that because of the linguistic constraints handed over to us by sentence structures that function via subject-predicate relationships we are stuck speaking of the It as if it were a thing. Instead of substantiating this It into an entity which is engaging in an act of giving, we can avoid the trappings of the subject-predicate relation, "Simply by thinking the "It" from out of the kind of giving that belongs to it: giving as destiny [*Geschick*], giving as a reaching that clears [*lichtendes Reichen*]"

(Heidegger, 1988: 19). Hence, if the It and the giving are simultaneous we must come to think *das Freie* as the “region” from which the giving takes place—or which does the giving—as the giving itself, which in some sense is enacted, or at the very least held open, by our status as Da-sein.

How can one undertake a phenomenological engagement with things if what we are attempting to think is no longer an entity, but rather an occurrence—no longer a noun, but a verb? What happens when we take seriously that, “what Heidegger cannot abide is the determination of this open taking its start in things. The representational tradition objectifies the open by thinking of it from the overstepping of things” (Mitchell, 2002: 325)? What we have to begin thinking is how dramatic this move away from representational thinking really is. As Mitchell explains, if we do not make this move away from representational thinking, this opening into which we must step insofar as we are ecstatic cannot be encountered at all. And this is where the true difficulty emerges—and where the importance of ecstatic thinking asserts itself. We have to think outside of ourselves in multiple senses. Not only do we have to think ecstatically into our world to which we belong and which we are amidst, but we also have to begin thinking in a manner which is ecstatic to the dominant modes of receiving and interpreting phenomena. In fact, we have to think beyond any given phenomenon, and towards the giving of that phenomena itself. Our thinking can thus no longer be conceptual, as we cannot grasp (*greifen*) movement, occurrence, or enactment as a concept (*Begriff*). Such thinking would be to isolate movement and insist that it speaks to us from one moment within its movement, which is thus to annul motion or occurrence itself. Thus thinking an occurrence has to be as mobile as the occurrence which is to be thought. Here the sense of phenomenology has to be

reconsidered—it is no longer letting the phenomena show itself in a manner that is appropriate to its self-showing, (i.e., we cannot rest on our laurels with regards to the *ungedachte* of the call “to the things themselves”, and proceed without questioning) but rather a demand that we think occurrence as occurrence, as a phenomena which cannot be reduced to any given existent *entity*.

What happens to the ontic-ontological distinction at this point in time? What remains if we are no longer attempting to ask the question of the meaning of being over and against beings, but rather attempting to think the question of being, insofar as it is an occurrence which takes place as the occurrence of beings? Heidegger names this occurrence *Seyn*, reintroducing an archaic spelling (which we will translate as beyng) which “serves not only to distinguish it from *Sein als Seiendheit* (being as beingness) but also to suggest a certain anteriority with respect to the metaphysical concept of being. As the condition of possibility, as that by which the very space of circulation between beings and beingness is first opened up, beyng can itself be identified neither as a being nor as the beingness (whatness, *idea*) of beings” (Sallis, 2004: 86). In relationship to the *Beiträge* and the demand for beyng-historical thinking, Alejandro Vallega writes, “[In *Being and Time* Heidegger] speaks of an ontological difference between entities at hand and being. Indeed, the very term *seynsgeschichtlich* indicates a single motion of thought, a single matter to be thought in this motion, a single temporal occurrence beyond this ontological dualism” (Vallega, 2001: 52).

“Metaphysics thinks the different—Being and beings—but not the difference as such,” argues Caputo. Citing as examples of what he has in mind, he writes, “Plato thinks the difference between *eidos* and individual; Aristotle, between first and second *ousia*; Thomas, between *esse subsistens* and *ens participatum*.” But as Caputo notes, this is not what

constitutes a thinking of being, at least not for the later Heidegger—and I would argue, at least in a certain sense, the early Heidegger as well. Caputo continues, “none of these thinkers who stand in the light within which metaphysics occurs thinks the granting of that light, thinks the clearing, the very light process by means of which the ontological difference between Being and beings is illuminated” (Caputo, 1982: 4). But this of course, is not the only thing to be thought in the move beyond onto-theology for Heidegger.

To see this readjustment of the relationship between being and beings as a collapsing of the distinction runs the risk of sounding like a move away from the question of being which Heidegger repeatedly says is always his guiding question. So how are we to think about this collapse? Is it a collapse at all? In *The Onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics*, Heidegger presents the ontological difference in the following way: “not only does being ground beings as their ground, but beings in their turn ground, cause [*verursacht*] being in their way. Beings can do this only insofar as the fullness of being “is” as beings” (Heidegger, 2002: 137). That is to say that being essentially occurs as beings—no beings without their being, but in turn, being only “is” because there are beings which are. There is no univocal grounding relationship between these two moments, rather we can only speak of them as differentiated insofar as they entail (*verursachen*) one another. Thus, if we want to think being outside of metaphysics, and beyond aprioricity, we must think the way in which beings *wes*—as being-in-itself is nothing at all. And this is to think *Seyn*-beyng.

While proceeding cautiously, let us look more closely at how the intertwining of being and beings, i.e., their reciprocal entailment, requires us to proceed (and eventually proceed beyond this opposition), particularly as, if one is taking careful note, they will identify that we have returned to the tripartite structure of phenomenology at this point: an

engagement with being must take place with regards to an entity, then we move to the site—which in this case is the particular epochal determination of being in question, and finally we look to the act of situating—from whence is this *Bestimmung des Seins* given, if it is appropriate to say *gibt es* (Schürmann, 1992: 20)? This tripartite structure looks as follows: we think beyond the initial moment of phenomenological engagement as it takes place in relationship to a being in a given domain of human experience—we also have to attempt to think beyond the bounds of comprehensibility, beyond the bounds of any given delimited domain, back to the ground of that domain, that which makes any such delimitation possible in the first place. This is precisely what Heidegger is attempting to point towards with this language of clearing. This is precisely what Nancy has in mind when he writes the following extraordinarily difficult and revealing passage:

Every thinking is therefore a thinking about freedom at the same time that it thinks *by* freedom and thinks *in* freedom. It is no longer exactly a question here of the limit between the comprehensible and the incomprehensible. Or rather, what happens here, in the free arising of thought, happens precisely on this limit, as the play or very operation of this limit. Thinking is always thinking on the limit. The limit of comprehending defines thinking. Thus thinking is always a thinking about the incomprehensible—about this incomprehensible that “belongs” to every comprehending, as its own limit...there is no thought unless it is carried to the limit of thought. (Nancy, 1993: 54)

Not only is Nancy demanding that thinking take place on the limits of what is comprehensible conceptually speaking, but rather, we have to question the very way in which we understand what it means to think—particularly if, as Nancy will say and I will argue, *thinking is the experience of freedom*. Here the demand for an ecstatic thinking which breaks through the bounds of a philosophy which is one of purely immanent exegesis is what it constitutes to think at all. Thinking is critical and the enactment of critique is itself

the experience of freedom. Let us hold this aside for the next section of this chapter—it will reassert itself more fully there.

John Sallis articulates this impossibility, this thinking at the limit, from within philosophy as metaphysics—and potentially as a kind of phenomenology—in the following way:

...as a turning to Being as presence, the thinking of philosophy is incapable of what one might call—leaving open still even its very possibility—thinking the clearing. The clearing is the unthought site of the thinking of philosophy, a site even unthinkable for the thinking of philosophy, for that turning whose very condition is that the site be concealed as such, and along with it, the belongingness of thinking to that site. (Sallis, 1990: 32)

In a potentially identical manner to the way in which any regional ontology is incapable of questioning its own foundations without halting its possibility of doing what it does, e.g. if applied biologists begin to question what exactly constitutes life and why we delimit the field of biology the way that we do, the act of ‘doing’ biology will be called into question, metaphysical thinking, insofar as it is a representational, conceptual thinking which necessarily grasps (*greift*) and halts the objects of thought cannot ever begin to think its own origins in (the) clearing. Why is this? It is because, as we just said, clearing is not an object to be grasped, *beyng* cannot be reduced to beings or being. We cannot configure it as such while at the same time grasping what is at stake in it. Sallis continues, “If clearing first grants thinking, then thinking cannot be a representational activity of a subject that would take the clearing as the object of thinking. Thinking is not the subject of, but rather is subject to, the clearing—even in the case of a thinking that mimetically opens the clearing” (Sallis, 1990: 35). Thinking is subject to the clearing, yet reciprocity alters this distinction such that we can no longer understand clearing as the ground of our thinking, as the transcendental condition

of possibility of our thinking. Sallis argues that thinking as ‘nonphilosophy’ takes place as a mimesis of the movements of transcendental philosophy, and is thus still within the domain of philosophy—insofar as it is defined *via negativa* (Sallis, 1990: 33). The question is, whether or not in this repetition of digging and tunneling under the edifice that is the metaphysical structure as such, the very notion of grounds is not transformed in such a way as to push us beyond the logic of the supplement that Sallis is putting to work at this point in time.¹⁷ Can a mimesis of philosophy as transcendental take us beyond the bounds of what are available to philosophy as such? What do we encounter, what do we think in a thinking of the clearing?

Insofar as one inquires into this ground of our thinking, insofar as it is a ground only insofar as it is an occurrence, and accordingly not a solid basis, a consistent foundation, it is important that we realize that this *Grund* is itself an *Abgrund*, a perpetually receding ground—an abyss. Let us turn to a provocative quote from Heidegger’s *Principle of Reason* lectures. In closing this lecture course, Heidegger writes, “Being, as what grounds, has no ground; as the abyss it plays the play that, as *Geschick*, passes being and *Grund* to us. The question remains whether and how we, hearing the movements of this play, play along and accommodate ourselves to the play” (GA10, 169). If thinking is what brings us towards this *Abgrund*, this abyss, this perpetually receding ground, what exactly are we left with other than *Erschrecken*, paralyzing terror? Susan Schoenbohm explains that insofar as this is one of

¹⁷ I mention this language of digging and tunneling in reference to another work of John Sallis’, as it seems that he may feel he is enacting the same deconstructive maneuver in *Echoes* in relationship to Heidegger that he does with Kant in his *Spacings*. There, in relationship to the critical project, Sallis writes, “The fissure of critical reason is now unmistakable: in its opening move toward restoring the ground it cannot but plant itself upon that very ground—that is, the bedrock to which it would tunnel down is identical with the ground that that bedrock would support and make firm, the ground tunneled out by the history of metaphysics” (Sallis, 1987: 16). This is an astonishingly powerful insight in relationship to the Kantian project—however, insofar as Heidegger rethinks *Grund*, and does so in a knowing relationship to the history from which he emerges, I am unsure if this same deconstructive move holds.

the fundamental attunements of the ‘other beginning’ that is at stake in the *Beiträge*, “thinking is attuned more to the withdrawal of being than to their wondrous arising” (Schoenbohm, 2001: 22). What would it mean to be attuned to this perpetual withdrawal, this absolute lack of ground and foundation? How might one respond? Is it in wonder or terror—are these separable from each other? Or is this rather the determination of the moment in which one receives, struggles with, and responds to the experience of freedom? It is precisely this moment that we must attempt to think through more rigorously in relationship to the sense(s) of reciprocity, ecstasy, and thinking that we have been bringing to light thus far.

Section II The Freedom of the *Abgrund*

A thinking that is of the clearing in the double sense has numerous consequences. Not only must we think outside of ourselves in the way in which all phenomenology is ecstatic, but we also must think beyond the bounds of pre-determined theoretical apparatuses that determine the limits of thinkability for us in any given historical epoch. Thinking will thus begin to function as a moment which pushes us beyond or before the bounds of our own epoch towards (an enactment of) the clearing. Thinking thus takes place in the confrontation with those supreme historical principles which determine the manner in which being presences as beings. Thinking encroaches on these principles and asks about how and why they reign. Heidegger explains, “There is being only in this or that historical impression (*Prägung*): *Physis*, *Logos*, *Hen*, *Idea*, *Energeia*, Substantiality, Objectivity, Subjectivity, Will, Will to Power, the Will to Will” (Heidegger, 2002: 134). History occurs insofar as these principles give way to one another as the dominant manner of presencing transforms.

Robert Bernasconi cautions, as to how we should not mistake what Heidegger is saying with regards to these words or names:

The words for Being are titles for the rule that holds sway in different historical epochs. These epochs are not to be understood as historical periods. They must be understood in terms of the granting and withholding of Being, the granting of Being through the rule of the word that determines how things are and how they are not. The words for Being are not just formal titles or descriptions that might be provided afterward. They are ... originary. (Bernasconi, 1985: 40)

These guiding words—these names for/of being—are not intelligible from within the epoch itself, they only become thinkable insofar as the reign of that guiding word begins to falter. Schürmann writes, “the reversals of history are what makes it intelligible. The focus that an epoch ranks supreme—the code that holds together the activities and the words in which it recognizes itself—comes into sight in the crises that are fatal to its rule” (Schürmann, 1992: 30). Thinking occurs insofar as it is able to think about the giving which is excessive to the givenness of beings under the reign of these various epochal determinations, and this ability to think the giving occurs only in light of the fact that Heidegger’s philosophical labors take place in an epoch where a word for being is lacking. Only in this failure do we have access to the history of being as the sequence of epochal determinations—otherwise being in its character as *bestimmt* by a guiding word would overdetermine our engagement with being and foreclose on us the possibility of making the move to the third step of the tripartite structure of phenomenology. Bernasconi explains, “Those words of Being were at once a giving and withholding of Being, *disclosing Being, but not disclosing themselves as doing so*” (Bernasconi, 1985: 43). It is the fact that they do not disclose themselves as doing so which limits and overdetermines. Just as Hölderlin was able to name the holy—the site from which the god’s address normally arises (Bernasconi, 1985: 61)—in the god’s absence, so the philosopher in

turn must “attend, singing, to the trace of the fugitive gods” (GA5, 272).¹⁸ The difference between the two being that where Hölderlin seeks the gods and finds the holy, the philosopher seeks a word for being and finds the clearing.

With this in mind let us hear Reiner Schürmann again: “the turning” is the attempt at de-centering the network of phenomena by seeking its condition not in ultimate grounds, but in the simple event of coming to presence and its historical modalities” (Schürmann, 2002: 41). Following Bernasconi’s reading, these simple events of coming to presence would only be able to emerge for us insofar as we live in an epoch which is not ruled by any word of being in particular—and this lack of a guiding word would provide us with the possibility of thinking the dispensation of being for the first time. But it would also mean that we could experience the groundlessness and an-archic character of being for the first time. At present, I want to express some hesitance with regards to Bernasconi’s interpretation—though I find it profound in the proper sense of the word—as, without further clarification with regards to the manner in which these words reign and determine what is thinkable, I do not want to assert that Hölderlin and Heidegger have the market cornered on the experience of the fleeing of the gods, or the experience of the *Abgrund*. Let us continue, and proceed with caution.

As I have asked before, where do these determinations come from? Asking such a question, in a certain sense, always returns us to a kind of onto-theology to which Heidegger is resistant, and thus the question may strike us as misguided. Yet at this point the question is entirely appropriate, as its answer demonstrates how onto-theology, if taken far enough,

¹⁸ We also ought to be thinking of the famous moment from the *Postscript to “What is Metaphysics?”*, wherein Heidegger writes, “The thinker says being. The poet names the holy” (GA9, 312). Heidegger there explains that this saying of the thinker can only occur in a confrontation with the clearing. We will return to this more fully in the next chapter

becomes self-deconstructing. Through an investigation of the principle of reason—the seemingly ultimate principle of onto-theology—with the principle of reason itself as our guide the answer appears: they emerge from nowhere. Insofar as we think back through the givenness of things, to how they are given, to where they are given from, we are left at the clearing, at *aletheia* which as our entrance into thinking *beyng* disrupts the categories which the principle of reason employs. In *The History of Beyng*, Heidegger writes:

The Essencing (Wesung) of Truth as the Clearing of Beyng

Occurs on this side and constantly outside of the precinct of the truth of beings as such as a whole, this may now be interpreted beyond the purview of re-presentation (of thinking) or of “bodies” (of thinking as mechanistic calculation).

Where does truth essentially occur?

It can first be experienced essentially from out of the other beginning and as the other beginning.

The history of *beyng* [is the] where of the a-byss. (GA69, 160)

The a-byss—separated here to presumably point out the relationship between *Grund* and *Abgrund*—takes place in the history of *beyng*. Specifically, it takes place in a thinking which is directed towards this history and attempts to think the history of *beyng* as it takes place—concealed—behind the back of the history of metaphysics. Heidegger goes on to explain that *beyng*-historical thinking, “stands outside all relation to science, art, politics”—all of which are domains constituted by beginning of metaphysics. Rather, “*beyng*-historical thinking questions into the decision of the essence of truth as the essence of *beyng*. This thinking thinks forth in *beyng*, it is above all determined as the particular attuning to *beyng*” (GA69, 167). This attuning to *beyng* as the occurrence of truth in history is a thinking which thinks that without which we would have no ability to think of sciences, art, or politics. But, as we have said, it is no thing. It makes possible epochal determinations, but cannot be thought within them.

This is a preliminary response to the question posed in the first section of the chapter about the way in which being relates to its determinations, and it is an answer we have been working out for sometime. Yet this response leads us to ask two new questions. First, where does this abyss beyond, before, and within the historical determinations of being take us? And second, how do we get there? The remainder of this chapter will deal with attempting to respond to these two questions.

First, how do we get to a thinking of the abyss? Let us posit that *das Freie* is a “region” only insofar as it is a “manner of comportment”—a *Richtung* and a *Verhalten*, a relation—and it is this comportment which permits, which *frees* the human to be able to think what is given outside of the delimiting violence of conceptually determinative thinking. This *freeing*, this *Gelassenheit*¹⁹, is the condition of thinking. Yet, what of this reciprocity? How are we to understand a comportment as fundamentally a kind of relationship (*Verhalten*)? Nancy writes, “Freedom precedes thinking, because thinking proceeds from freedom and because it is freedom that gives thinking” (Nancy, 1993: 51). The difficulty for us is take note of the aforementioned reciprocal relationship between this thought of freedom and thinking. Insofar as freedom must now become thought of in terms of this giving of what there is to be thought, the remnant of freedom is to be found in adverbial renderings such as “freely.” What is given to thought can be given “freely”, but this is possible only insofar as one “freely” comports oneself to what is to be given (Nancy, 1993: 55). Though *das Freie*, the giving, is the condition of thinking, it is as a condition only because of its relationship with the thinking which is to do the receiving. Thus there is an

¹⁹ With the introduction of the sense of *Gelassenheit*, the reader should recall the sense of *Begegnenslassens von* that defined the ecstasy of the present in *Being and Time*. This letting-oneself-be-met-by, ought to be heard as somehow reminiscent of the fundamentally middle voice character of all human comportment that *Gelassenheit* describes a particular variety of.

equiprimordial reciprocal determination between that which is given to be thought and the thinking which receives it, insofar as it receives what is given in a manner which is appropriate to its self-showing. This is the problematizing of transcendental philosophy that takes place in the *Letter on "Humanism"*, where, to repeat, Heidegger writes, "only so long as the clearing of being comes to pass [*ereignet*] does being pass itself on to man. But that the *Da*, the clearing as the truth of being itself, comes to pass [*ereignet*] is the sending of being itself. This is the destiny of the clearing" (GA9, 336). And it is this that prompts Nancy to write, "This freedom is not a question or problem for thinking: in thinking, freedom remains its own opening" (Nancy, 1993: 56). This reciprocal movement is also, I would claim, what prompts Heidegger to begin to refer to *Da-sein* as the "between" (*das Zwischen*). In the *Beiträge*, Heidegger explains that "this between grounds the beingness of beings in beyng", which is to say that only insofar as the between occurs as the "saying of the truth" and the "contemplation (*Besinnung*) towards beyng" can we think the simultaneity of beings and beyng over and against the difference between beings and being which seems to need to be bridged (GA65, 14). Here, there is not priority—only reciprocity.

Digging deeper into this oldest ground which is no ground at all, Schürmann writes, "the metaphor of clearing must thus not be taken to suggest a patch of light...but a fulguration; not an open field, but the opening up of a field; not a glade in a forest, but ... the very felling of the wood" (Schürmann, 1992: 221). As has been said, the clearing is not a site, a locale, but rather must be understood to be as verbal as it is nominative. Also, the clearing is not a transcendental condition of the possibility for my thinking—rather thinking and the clearing are always intertwined, the latter always being moved both away from and towards it in thinking, so long as this thinking is a thinking of the limit. Any present

determination or delimitation of beings is in a relationship to the clearing, even if it only relates to this name of being in forgetting it, which is the usual manner of proceeding—and in one sense, the necessary manner.

All thinking, insofar as we accept the interpretation of it that I have been presenting thus far, is a thinking towards this clearing from out of a world in which the originary status of clearing is covered over, concealed, and forgotten. To reiterate, this thinking enacts the tripartite structure of phenomenology, by moving from the sheer brute fact of the givenness of things, and the way in which this givenness always presents itself as already interpreted, towards this interpretation, and finally to the site of its emergence. What is important is that this originary occurrence that is clearing never manifests itself as such within any particular epochal determination, as it is not an existent thing, rather it is always at play and always being moved towards and reconfigured by those who undergo thinking as an experience, where experience is understood as both “sudden and unique”—i.e, insofar as it is understood as disruption (Bernasconi, 1985: 81).

Let us ask the question again: How does thinking enact (as a response to) the clearing? As Heidegger explains immediately after the aforementioned passage from the *Letter on “Humanism”*, “this sentence does not say that being is the product of the human being” (GA9, 336). So what is the relationship, what is this reciprocity? Heidegger writes, “the thrower in this projection [the human being in ecstatic projection] is not the human being but being itself, which sends the human being in the ek-sistence of Da-sein that is his essence. This destiny [Geschick] comes to pass as the clearing of being—which it is” (GA9, 337). Here, is it not the case that the *arche kineseos* of ecstasy is placed exclusively in the hands of being? How is this not to make the status of Da-sein one of exclusive passivity?

Where does the previously discussed middle voice assert itself in Heidegger's text? What we have to undertake for the remainder of this section is to gain an understanding of how "thinking is a deed. But a deed that at the same time surpasses all *praxis*" (GA9, 361). In other words, if we begin to accept that thinking is a way of being (and this may potentially be a double genitive), how does this come about, how is it enacted, and what does it do that is more *praxical* than *praxis*?

In his *Gelassenheit* we find Heidegger offering a particularly succinct account of his thinking—specifically a potentially simplified account of the distinction between what he calls calculative thinking [*rechnende Denken*] and contemplative meditation [*besinnliche Nachdenken*]²⁰. To state it simply—calculative thinking is the result and potentially extreme end of representational thinking as such. It is described here as thinking which "calculates"—thinking which "never stops, never approaches contemplation" (Heidegger, 1959: 15). Calculative thinking, like all regional thinking never asks questions about its origins, its own basic constitution—rather it moves ahead without puzzling about them. Yet Heidegger is quick to point out, reiterating a claim that I made earlier, that even in this mode of thinking, "we always reckon with conditions that are given" (Heidegger, 1959: 14). Even this kind of thinking is still always only in response, even if it does not conceive of itself as such. All thinking is fundamentally a response to the givenness of whatever is thought

²⁰ I believe that the standard translation of these terms as calculative and meditative thinking does a bit too much violence to Heidegger's text. While words that take their root from 'to meditate' are certainly passable translations of words that are related to *besinnen*—an important word for both Heidegger and Schelling—translating *Nachdenken* as thinking without any note of the difference between *denken* and *nachdenken* can mislead the reader into thinking that these two bearings are distinguished only by the adjectives affixed to them. A quick glance at the way in which this word is used in German shows that though *nachdenken* certainly has a wide semantic range, most of the possible translations emphasize carefully attending to something. Whether the word is used in the sense of 'über eine Frage nachdenken'—where in it probably ought to be translated as 'to deliberate'—or as 'gründlich über etwas nachdenken'—where in it should be read as thinking something through at a fundamental level—they all focus on thinking something through.

provoking. In another text, *Was Heisst Denken?*, Heidegger writes, “Everything questionable and alarming [*Bedenkliche*] gives to think. But it gives this gift always and only insofar as the questionable *is* already from itself the to-be-considered” (GA8, 6). In other words, what is at issue for us is that we do not decide—as has already been said—what we get to think about. Our thinking is fundamentally responsive to the call of what is most thought-provoking, and what is most thought-provoking is discerned by the fact that it demands to be thought about. Yet what is given to us to be thought about—what addresses us, in itself serves as a kind of pointer. It points beyond itself to “what gives us this gift, the gift of what must properly be considered, we call most most questionable [*Bedenklichste*]” (GA8, 19). What else is this but the clearing? But what does all of this have to do with the way in which thinking is the experience of freedom?

What we have to establish, returning to Schürmann’s thought that the clearing is as much an act as a site, is how exactly the act of clearing can come about via some kind of comportment. If humans as *Da-sein* are fundamentally the *Da* of being, the site at which it takes place—potentially the (enactors and maintainers of the) clearing as such—how does this take place? We have already alluded to how it is a response to a call, a response to whatever it is that *heisst Denken*. We have pointed out, if all too briefly, the way in which this calling calls us to think about the calling itself—the giving and the *es* that *gibt*, which is, of course, nothing but the giving. We have also pointed out that this giving is presumably synonymous with the clearing—that which stands before any possible configuration of the sense of being, yet can never be an object to our thought. Finally we have pointed out that if we are to engage this clearing in thought, it must take place through a rigorous reformulation

of what exactly is at stake in ecstasy and in phenomenological engagement with what comes to pass as such. Yet, again, why is this an experience of freedom?

Insofar as freedom is understood as the maintenance or creation of possibility, we can immediately begin to understand the way in which thinking insofar as it is a movement towards the abyssal character of being is the perpetual realization of the way in which things presence as underdetermined. Though we may find ourselves in a rigorously determined world of delimitation, normalization, and basic modes of interpretation, it is possible by thinking radically—thinking into the grounds and foundations of things—to realize the ways in which these grounds themselves are fundamentally merely positings. Is it not the case that this is one of the many ways in which we could receive the German title of the *Principle of Reason? Der Satz Vom Grund?* The leap from a ground—the positing of a foundation in the moment of a burst or a decision. Not the necessity of the foundation—not the necessity of thinking the world within its parameters, but rather the absolute contingency and chance that is at stake in the fact that this is the way our world has been determined at all! This is not to say that I can wake up tomorrow morning and decide to take my world in a different manner than via the principle of reason—this is why this point is so tricky. Let us proceed, but with greater caution about the relationship between the givenness of beings as the presencing of being and humans response to it as Da-sein.

The world *is* fundamentally determined by the principle of reason. Heidegger explains, “we cannot leap out of the present age that is held in the sway of the fundamental principle of rendering sufficient reason” (GA10, 187). Yet, what exactly is the ground of this ground? What is the reason for the principle of sufficient reason, what justifies and guarantees it? What if the answer is nothing? What if the answer is, as we have already

discussed, “Being as what grounds has no grounds” (GA10, 169)? Onto-theology’s pursuit of that ultimate moment of the rendering of reasons fundamentally demonstrates the irrationality, or at least arationality, of such a moment. If such a site is to exist—if there is to be the location which lies at the *Grund* as the ultimate basis, as the *Theos* which gathers and unifies—it is not something for which an external reason can be rendered and hence we hit an impasse. Either we hold fast to the principle of reason, in which case we are led to assert that there can be no original ground—for any such positing begs the question of its ground. Or we part off from the principle of reason to posit an original moment which serves as the ground of reason itself which is arational. Neither of these conclusions are acceptable to onto-theology, as either we lose an ultimate ground or the ultimate ground is something which breaks down the principle of reason. Thus, in either case, the principle fails to provide our *Grund* and we seem to be left with *Abgrund*. What do we do with this abyss, with this fundamentally an-archic character of being? Heidegger does not tell us what to do with it, but he does tell us what it opens up: “...being, in sending itself, brings about the free of the temporal play-space and, in so doing, first liberates humans unto the free of whatever fitting essential possibilities they happen to have” (GA10, 140). Our world is always given to us in a specific configuration—and it is possible that this configuration always speaks a specific language—but that this does not mean that this is the nature of being as such, rather what is opened up through the thinking towards the clearing is freedom itself. Later in the same lecture course, Heidegger writes:

Being is what its original name—*logos*—says, destinally the same as the ground. Insofar as being essentially occurs, it has no ground. However, this is not because it grounds itself, but rather because each founding, also and in particular those which found themselves, remain discordant to being as ground. Each founding and already every appearance of foundability must degrade being to some being. Being as being

remains ground-less. Ground remains apart and away from being, namely as its first founding ground. Being: the a-byss. (GA 10, 166)

Insofar as we are able to think beyond grounds—that is, insofar as we are able to think outside of onto-theology—we are led to the a-byss. What is this experience?

To repeat my claim from the beginning of this chapter: freedom as the realization of the lack of necessity of any particular epochal determination of being, as the experience of possibility through contingency, is what emerges for us in the experience of thinking. Of course, this is why it is necessary that thinking be understood only as that which occurs at the limits of comprehensibility, as that which is perpetually transgressive, as that which is constantly burrowing under foundations—here to repeat Nancy, “in thinking freedom remains its own opening” (Nancy, 1993: 56). This manner of thinking freedom as the experience of underdetermination is explicitly described by Hans Ruin as, “an attempt to confront and speak out from the present historical situation, in order ultimately to transform and transcend it” (Ruin, 1998: 84). While I worry about this language of transcendence, Ruin’s point is clear—only a thinking which attends to the manner in which being presences within a specific historical determination and inquires into its necessity can potentially undermine the gravity and necessity of that situation. If this was the objective of this section, why did I spend all of this time discussing meditative thinking and *Was Heisst Denken?* It is precisely because, for Heidegger, it is through thinking as *Gelassenheit*, through releasement that such a movement can take place.

In his *Memorial Address* this is configured as a saying yes and no at the same time, but potentially more importantly it is configured as a *Gelassenheit zu den Dingen*—releasement toward things. This can be taken in two ways—it can be heard in one sense, and the sense

that Heidegger focuses on here, as a simple detachment from those things—here technology—and potentially those modes of thinking which dominate us. But it also can be heard as a releasement towards the occurrence of things. Thus, the releasement of the former kind will make possible a releasement of the latter kind—which seems to me to be the basic phenomenological demand of the move from reduction to construction/destruction. In the process of translating this section from the *Memorial Address*, Schurmann writes, “*Zu*, then does not mean “before, “faced with,” “in opposition to,” but rather the contrary, namely an approach or a destination” (Schürmann, 1978: 194). Accordingly, Schurmann retranslates, “*Gelassenheit zu den Dingen und die Offenheit für das Geheimnis gehören zusammen*” as “Letting ourselves be destined towards things and openness for the mystery belong together.”

What is this mystery? In his *On the Essence of Truth*, Heidegger describes the mystery, *Geheimnis*, as “Nothing less than the concealing of what is concealed as a whole, of beings as such, i.e. the mystery” (GA9, 194). This mystery is what holds sway “throughout the *Da-sein* of human beings.” What is at stake for Heidegger at this point is at once quite simple and quite complex: being is always given to us in a specific configuration, and all such configurations, insofar as they are revealing in a certain way, are always at the same time concealing in another. That is to say, insofar as any particular epochal determination discloses the world to us in one way, it limits the manner in which things can be encountered. All revealing is fundamentally and simultaneously concealing. The fundamental example in the Heidegger’s later work, and potentially in his work as a whole, is that of the epoch of technology. Insofar as things are given to us in their calculability and *Bestand* character, certain other ways of engaging beings—certain other possibilities are

foreclosed, held of out sight, out of our horizon of comprehensibility. He writes, “to reside in what is established is in itself not to let the concealing of what is concealed hold sway” (GA9, 195). Why? Because residing in the availability of things—under the established domain of some particular interpretation of being—engages things in terms of their pure presence and is thus in no way aware of how these particular entities are disclosed via their participation in an epochal determination of the presencing of being. Thus, when we engage given entities exclusively in the manner in which they are given and never ask questions about this givenness, we essentially become ahistorical—forgetting that this manner of revealing hinges upon concealment. If we are not able to think beyond the bounds of the dominant modes of engaging beings, Heidegger thinks we are fundamentally in errancy, in a detrimental way. But that sounds like a tautology is not all errancy detrimental? To assert that would be to mistake Heidegger’s point—as errancy “belongs to the inner constitution of the *Da-sein* into which historical human beings are admitted” (GA9, 196). However, we must be cautious and to think that this concealment is “a limit that occasionally announces itself”, as if we engage this concealment in this manner “concealing as a fundamental occurrence has sunk into forgottenness” (GA9, 195). In other words, though we always only find ourselves in a world which reveals certain possibilities and conceals others, it is not sufficient for us to live with the availability of things most of the time and occasionally turn to acknowledge the constitutive character of concealment—to think means to keep this concealment at play at all times. If concealment is a limit, it is one which is constantly asserting itself. It is not merely the periphery of revealing, it is immanent to it. It is this thinking of *aletheia*—the play of revealing and concealing—that is the “unthought as such. And yet this means that *aletheia* pervades all thought, persisting through metaphysics,

unheard until its end” (Bernasconi, 1985: 15). Let us now turn to investigate this play that has been adumbrated for the entirety of this chapter.

Section III *Ereignis and Gelassenheit*

What would it mean to be open to the mystery—to this revealing-concealing character of all epochal sendings or determinations of being? It would mean that we are open to the fact that revealing-concealing always rules and that we find ourselves within a possibility, with always more possibilities lying outside of our horizon. But this horizon must not be thought of as the limit point, beyond which there is *unbestimmt* being waiting to be formed—rather we must understand this horizon, and the word itself is probably problematic, as the point at the gravity of the readily available breaks down. It is for this reason that Heidegger writes, “Freedom, conceived on the basis of the in-sistent [always in a world] ek-sistence [yet always standing outside of itself and potentially holding open the clearing] of Dasein, is the essence of truth . . ., only because freedom itself originates from the originary essence of truth, the rule of the mystery in errancy” (GA9, 198). Freedom originates from the essence of truth, which as we have already discussed is the occurrence of disclosure (*aletheuein*)—but insofar as this occurrence only occurs as it is via the thinking of Da-sein, the determination is once again reciprocal. Freedom emerges in the thinking of being, the thinking towards the clearing, and that clearing only occurs insofar as it is brought to word, via the thinking that is the ek-sistence of Da-sein.²¹ For this reason—and the ways

²¹ Michel Haar explains, “Freedom is the act through which *Dasein* surpasses every particular entity as well as the totality of entities. This surpassing is accomplished solely by its ek-sistence and ekstastic movement. This freedom defined as *Dasein’s* being exposed to uncovering would be *prior* to all traditional definitions of freedom: arbitrary freedom or whimsical choice, absence of constraint, being receptive to a demand or ontic necessity” (Haar, 1993: 124).

in which this plays itself out in the relation of freedom and necessity has already been discussed in Chapter I and will be discussed more thoroughly in the two chapters which are to follow this one—Heidegger writes, “In the thinking of being the history-grounding liberation of humans for ek-sistence comes to word” (GA9, 198). Heidegger again:

Philosophical thinking is releasement of charitableness [*Gelassenheit der Milde*] that does not deny the concealment of beings as a whole. This thinking is especially the resoluteness of strictness that does not disrupt the concealing but compels its unbroken essence into the open of comprehension and thus into its own truth (GA9, 199).

As if thinking could disrupt the concealing as a whole! What is at issue here is not that thinking as technological demand that all things account for themselves, but rather that thinking as technological is ignorant to the fact that insofar as it is a determinative mode of engagement it closes off other possibilities—and hence ignores the concealment that its own act of revealing enacts. This is what enables such locutions to describe the history of metaphysics: a revealing-concealing which conceals that its revealing conceals, or a forgetting which forgets that it forgot. Schürmann writes, “when beings manifest themselves to [humans] under the traits of technology, the world opens itself in such a way that it closes and precludes other possibilities of settlement. It grants and refuses itself at the same time” (Schürmann, 1978: 195). Yet, this is not the major thrust of this quotation for our present task—rather it is most important that we notice that for Heidegger philosophical thinking is a *Gelassenheit*, a letting-be which enables us to think the abyssal character of any specific configuration of being.

Yet the letting is still the most important moment of all this—in fact it is a double letting, a reciprocity. As we have already discussed in the previous chapter, *Gelassenheit* is first and foremost a middle voice occurrence. It is fundamentally receptive—and hence the

letting be that could be said to be a comportment of the human being is dependent upon the fact that this same comportment (if we can say that being has a comportment) belongs to being. Being lets itself be determined by the decisions which ground epochal determinations, yet humans enter into Da-sein when they let themselves be directed by that determination, which is both generative of the thinkers comportment at that time, but is also generated and reinforced insofar as the thinker does not think being. If we remain determined by the availability of beings in their already established character, we do not encounter being—and this occurs precisely because one does not encounter the historical character of the way in which beings presence in their availability at that moment. This can only be experienced insofar as one begins to think the fact that being is something which can be appropriated.

The reciprocal determination of being and thinking is explicitly described by Schürmann as follows: “At this point, releasement designates identically man’s thinking and being’s openness” (Schürmann, 1978: 200). Only because being asserts itself in this middle voice and lets itself be taken up in such a letting—or because being always only discloses itself to us in some specific historical configuration, which demonstrates that it is open to interpretation, but an interpretation which from the perspective of human beings in the world which is always already undertaken for us, can *Gelassenheit* be thought of as a comportment which belongs to human beings. Being’s only way to be is in some specific moment of having been appropriated (in the sense of *ereignen*), and this is because being is fundamentally released to this possibility. This is what makes it possible for Schurmann to write, “releasement and appropriation [*Gelassenheit und Ereignis*], now, are names for one and the same event” (Schürmann, 1978: 212). Ruin affirms and echoes this claim in his

discussion of the importance of the introduction of the term *Ereignis* into Heidegger's thinking. He explains,

The task is not to add new determinations to being, but to reveal the dependence on being of thinking and language in general, or rather, to enable an experience of this dependency. To perform this task is to step into the *Ereignis*, a name for being to the extent that it gives itself precisely as that to which the thinker belongs. (Ruin, 1998: 84)

The importance of the status of *Gelassenheit* cannot be overstated, and even less so can the force of *Ereignis* in relationship to the words for being. It is through this simultaneous yes and no which is an openness to the mystery—the revealing-concealing character of all epochal determinations of being—that we can come into relationship and enact the clearing. *Gelassenheit* is the moment of enacting the clearing which Schürmann names above—and which Heidegger names somewhat differently in an essay entitled *Aletheia*. We must turn to the end of this essay to get a sense of the interplay between *Ereignis* and *Gelassenheit* named by Schürmann and Ruin.

Near the end of *Aletheia*, after an extensive discussion of the relationship between *phusis* as upsurgent presencing and hiding in Heraclitus' fragment, "*phusis kruptesthai philei*", (to which we will return via Schelling in the next chapter) Heidegger writes:

The goldenness of the invisible shining of the clearing does not let itself be grasped, because it is not itself a grasping. Rather it is the pure coming to pass [*Ereignen*]. The invisible shining of the clearing effuses in the self-sheltering, safe-keeping of destiny [*Verwahrnis des Geschickes*]. The shining of the clearing is therefore, at the same time, its self-veiling and in this sense, it is the darkest. (GA7, 288)

Here, we encounter what Jean-Francois Courtine refers to as the "proper name" of *Lichtung*, "the name which emerges more and more clearly (so to speak) as the "word" of a long path of thought: *das Ereignis*" (Courtine, 1993: 250). While this is the word which identifies this path of thinking—the path which heads towards the clearing—it is not a word for being,

rather it is that which precedes and exceeds all the words for being, insofar as they all belong to the long history of metaphysics. The encounter with *Ereignis* is something which can only occur insofar as we encounter the lack of a name for being and move towards thinking the *es gibt*. This move towards thinking *Ereignis*—thinking that which withdraws at the very moment of its presence (and accordingly breaks out of the sense of presence which dominates all the epochal determinations given and reigning as words of/for being)—means that thinking moves into the condition which would make it possible for us to think a world at all.²² This is the move towards thinking in the other beginning.

Let me be a bit more precise about the relationship between the first and the other beginning for Heidegger. As Sallis explains, the first beginning “designates the beginning of philosophy, of what later comes to be called metaphysics. The first beginning occurs in and through the Platonic determination of being as *idea*” (Sallis, 2006: 179). According to Sallis, the first beginning is thus made the moment at which the distinction between the sensible and the intelligible begins to reign; in other words, the first beginning is another way to articulate what Heidegger calls onto-theology. This beginning is made in response to the confrontation with the groundlessness of things that we experience so long as we are attuned towards beings in wonder.

²² It is for this reason that I believe Derrida’s critique (or at least what I take to be a critique, since Heidegger’s name is not mentioned here) of Heidegger at the beginning of *Rogues*—and presumably in numerous other locales—is slightly mistaken. With regards to the *khora*, which it seems as though Derrida wants to contrast to the clearing, he writes, “*Khora* would make or give *place*; it would give rise—without every *giving* anything—to what is called the coming of event...*Khora*, before the “world,” before creation, before the gift and being—*khora* that *there is* perhaps “before” any “there is” as *es gibt*” (Derrida, 2005: xiv). If we can assume that this is in fact a critique of the originary status of the *Abgrund* that is clearing—if Derrida wants to assert, following his logic of the gift, that giving and receiving are always in some sense co-originary, and if he wants to see this as a deconstructive move in relationship to the Heideggerian text, I believe he has missed the fact that this motion this double movement is already present in Heidegger’s thinking of *Ereignis*. I think I have elucidated its occurrence sufficiently to not belabor it yet again here. That said, Derrida’s assertion is potentially elucidating for my own efforts in this chapter, though not in the way that he may think they are.

In *Basic Questions of Philosophy*, a lecture course given when Heidegger was composing his 'being-historical' texts (the *Contributions*, *Contemplation*, *The History of Being*, etc.), Heidegger explains that *Er-staunen*, the terms with which he translates the Greek *thaumazein*—and we render as wonder—differs from other possible attunements that one could hold towards beings insofar as all of the other attunements (*Sichwundern*, *Verwundern*, *Bewundern*, *Staunen*, and *Bestaunen*) he discusses engage something unified and determinate that strikes us as unusual insofar as it shows itself against a background or backdrop of the usual. In attending to what strikes us as unusual all of these attunements are instances of a “turning back and away from the usual and thereby passing over and letting the usual stand in its usualness” (GA45, 166). *Er-staunen*, which linguistically would appear to be a mere intensification of *Staunen*, or, astonishment at something peculiar, does not turn away from the usual that serves as the unarticulated backdrop against which something peculiar—say, a moose wandering the streets of downtown Seattle—would mark itself off as unusual. Rather through the encounter with the unusual—our city moose—the usual—the city itself—strikes us as peculiar or unusual as well. Thus in wonder, “the most usual itself becomes the most unusual” (GA45, 166). This leads to a variety of consequences, the most of important of which is that “wonder that goes to the greatest extreme knows no way out of the unusualness of that which is most usual” (GA45, 167). The reason why one who finds themselves in wonder cannot return to the usual is precisely because in wonder the usual itself, as the measure by which one could give an account of the unusual—‘Oh, the moose escaped from the Seattle Zoo’—is lost (the very thought of a Zoo as somehow ‘normal’ would be lost). Wonder is thus a *Grundstimmung*, or a fundamental attunement

because it “goes into and stands in the whole” (GA45, 168), determining how the whole itself shows itself as a whole.

The whole that is in question here for Heidegger is, in the first beginning, framed as “beings *as* beings, *ens qua ens, to on he on.*” At the juncture wherein beings, *ens*, or *to on*, are determined as the beings that they are, i.e., at the interpretive moment that lies in the *Grundstimmung* that is wonder, is overlooked precisely because the *as*, the *qua*, the *he*, is overlooked. He explains:

What is named here with the ‘as’, the *qua*, the *he*, is the ‘between’ that is thrown asunder in wonder [*ist jenes im Er-staunen auseinandergeworfene >>Zwischen<<*], the open of a still neither intimated nor heeded play space, in which beings as such come into play, namely as the beings that they *are*, in the *play of their being*. (GA45, 169)

What is this play space that is thrown asunder in wonder? Heidegger is quite clear: it is the duplicity of *aletheia*: “*aletheia*, or unconcealment, is, for inceptual Greek thinking, the essence of being itself.” Yet this thinking of unconcealment gloms onto *aletheia* as the “upsurging stepping-forth, the presencing in the open” (GA45, 169), ignoring that it may be the case that “beyng is, in its essence, self-concealing,” a possibility that Heidegger says may be the “not yet recognized, and never to be experienced or expressed, truth of the whole of occidental metaphysics” (GA45, 189). For Heidegger, the result of the encounter with beings as a whole in wonder—the first beginning—is to treat them as pure upsurgence, i.e., *phusis*. Given that this upsurgence is undetermined it could be grasped or engaged in many ways, however, the Greeks, according to Heidegger, engaged it through *techne*. He explains that *techne* need not be about exploitation, and actually should be about “holding to the reign of *phusis* in unconcealment” (GA45, 179), yet this engagement of *phusis* through *techne*, “holds the possibility of *arbitrariness*, the unbridled positing of purposes [*losgebundenen Zwecksetzung*]”

(GA45, 180). Heidegger's claim would seem to be that given the emphasis placed upon *phusis* as upsurge, and the simultaneous neglect of concealment that one finds—or that Heidegger seems to find—in Anaximander, Heraclitus, and Parmenides, the first beginning of philosophy in wonder *enables* the “continuation of the first beginning to *ousia – idea*,” which is the “beginning of metaphysics and philosophy” (GA70, 101). If being is as beingness that is purely present, it would then become *possible* to give a principal account of how beings as a whole presence.

However, there is no general necessity that would dictate the turn to *Eigenmächtigen*—arbitrariness or making ones own—from out of the encounter with the world through the fundamental attunement of wonder, nor that one who is attuned through wonder necessarily ignore the belonging-together of revealing and concealing in *aletheia*; however, if this positing of purposes, this overdetermination of beings as a whole towards human ends takes place—which for Heidegger it clearly did—*aletheia* as unconcealment is traded in for truth as correctness insofar as philosophy becomes just another skill that works towards ends. Nevertheless, we must wonder if the intimation of the other beginning could not be a more robust form of wonder that would, in fact, attend to the duplicity of *aletheia*.

Opposed to such an arbitrary positing of purposes that overdetermined beings and closed off a questioning posture, the other beginning would then be the recognition of the status of attuned human as the between that responds to the abyssal character of the play of *aletheia*. Rather than letting this between be thrown asunder in the moment wherein beings as a whole are determined by a *Grundstimmung* such that the free space in which that determination could be made was concealed, the other beginning would take hold of that which remained concealed in the first beginning, this free space, this free play of *aletheia*.

This explains why, in the *Beiträge*, Heidegger says, “The other beginning is the more originary taking-over of the concealed essence of philosophy” (GA65, 436); the other beginning would be the recognition of that which is the condition of the possibility of the first beginning—but more importantly it would be the recognition that this condition, as a ground, grants us no security, no certainty, no measure. Thus the attunement of the other beginning, for Heidegger, is, as Schoenbohm described for us earlier, attuned to the *letbe* at the heart of *aletheia*, a point which Sallis echoes and affirms (Sallis, 2006: 190).

Thus in *The History of Beyng*, under the heading ““Philosophy” in the Other Beginning”, Heidegger writes, “incipient philosophy—essential thinking—does not think the “human” and it does not think God. It does not think the world and it does not think the earth. It does not think beings as such, it does not think beings as a whole—rather, it thinks beyng.” Thinking beyng, which cannot be grasped and refuses explanation in terms of beings, but “grants the clearing” (GA69, 168) is the entrance into freedom. Heidegger again:

Freedom

is the belonging to the property of beyng. The property of being is the essentially occurring truth as the clearing of concealment.

The binding from beyng not bound to being (Seiende).

The essential sense of truth and freedom. (GA69, 170)

If freedom is the property of beyng, and beyng is nothing—beyng is not bound to any being or beingness—it is this essential unboundedness that gives us the *Wesensinnigkeit* of freedom. This essential sense would be a response to the abyssal character of being in a manner that did not immediately attend primarily to the presence of things, but to their simultaneous withdrawal. I think, thus, that Schoenbohm is placing too much emphasis upon the need of the other beginning to attend primarily to withdrawal. It would seem entirely consistent with Heidegger’s account to think that *Erschrecken* as a *Grundstimmung* of

the other beginning could be disposed to us in our encounter with the *play* of revealing and concealing—it would seem to make Heidegger into too oppositional of a thinker to say that the first beginning attends to upsurge and hence the other beginning will attend to withdrawal.

To begin to wrap up this chapter, let us continue to flesh this thought of the unbound-character of freedom via a return to *Time and Being*. The entirety of this lecture could be read as an attempt to bring us beyond the thinking of being under the words for being such as, “*idea, energeia, actualitas*, [and] will” which makes philosophy think Being in terms of how beings presence under the dominion of these words (Heidegger, 1988: 22). The move to thinking *Ereignis*, as was just said, is the move to think the character of the giving which must always withdraw itself such that the gift can be presented without breaking down the possibility of the gift, and our attunement to this withdrawal that grants us a play-space is thinking in the other beginning. This is why Courtine explains that the giving must annul itself for the given—what is given in the *es gibt*, whether that be *Sein* or *Zeit* in this lecture—to be encountered. But since that which is given is no longer ruled by a word for being, we can now interrogate the giving, even in its fundamental withdrawal. This giving, which Courtine describes as “that instance of nonappearance of which grants appearing, grants phenomenality to all phenomena” (Courtine, 1993: 251) is the constitutive limit of thought—present in its absence. And it is only in our encounter with it that freedom as a rupture with the determinations of being is experienced.

The realization of the abyssal character of all grounds opens up the realization of the possibility that things could, will be, and have been otherwise. This is the movement, the experience of ec-static thinking, and this is why it is an experience of freedom—an

experience of the underdetermined character of all the configurations of sense that emerge throughout the history of being. John Lysaker writes, “As a child of History, sense is not the consequent of any ground, but a leap out of a white emptiness into a differentiated dimension of co-presencing that comes to pass in an underdetermined yet characteristic fashion” (Lysaker, 2002: 182). All configurations of being, i.e., sense, are unnecessary determinations—which must take place. We necessarily find ourselves amidst sense, but not this specific sense. The sense of the world can and has changed throughout history—insofar as we are able to comport ourselves towards the things of our world, “the appearance of beings in some impression [*Prägung*]” (GA10, 131), in such a way as to attempt to see beyond that impression—to see beyond our desire to encounter the coming to pass that is being as objects for us to conceptualize, and begin to think of them in their singularity and their verbal character as an occurrence, we are moved to a feeling of freedom, a realization of the lack of necessity, the an-archic character of being, and the preservation of possibility.

Yet this preservation of possibility and the feeling of freedom which emerges from it maintains itself fully within what Heidegger has characterized as the first beginning of philosophy—after all as Schürmann is quick to point out, the *Beiträge* remains nothing but a contribution to that which *seynsgeschichtliches Denken*—beyng-historical thinking—seeks to twist free from. Hence the title, these are ‘contributions’ (Schürmann, 2003: 524). The fundamental attunement of the experience of freedom that I have thus far detailed has been experience of wonder—yet what of this other beginning which is intimated? If we accept *Erstaunen/thaumazein*/wonder as the *Stimmung* or attunement of the first beginning—which is something I intend to call into question as this project continues—how does this attunement relate to the fact that *die Lichtung* is the site of lightening and shining while at the same time it

is the site of the greatest darkness, as Heidegger explained in *Aletheia?* Already in our discussion of *On the Essence of Truth* we have had a glimpse of that towards which we must turn our exploration. In the midst of this essay which spends its earlier focus upon the character of freedom as the letting-be that we have been detailing here, Heidegger makes a turn towards an investigation of the mystery. As Gasché writes, “the concealing of this concealedness—the mystery—is older than all letting-be” (Gasché, 1999: 46). This *Grundgeschehen*, this fundamental occurrence, is the *lethe* that accompanies all *aletheia*, it is the gravity and density at the heart of all levity. As Heidegger writes in the *Beiträge*, “questioners have cast off all curiosity; their seeking loves the abyss, in which they know the oldest ground” (GA65, 15). This oldest ground—a ground which as *Abgrund*/abyss ruptures with the metaphysical sense of ground—insofar as we face the fact that this “ground grounds as a-byss” (GA65, 29).

I would hope that this chapter would have provided the justification for calling into question the sense of whether or not *lethe* or *aletheia* is more ancient the sense of temporal priority—since the encounter with the *lethic* only occurs via the fact that something is given to us in its disclosure, even though this disclosure implies the closure prior to it—yet I do think that there is something about this *Abgrund* which has thus far gone uninvestigated, i.e., the attunement which accompanies the kind of thinking which inquires into the withdrawal of *Ereignis*.

In the next chapter, I will investigate the figure of the *Unvorkdenkliche* in Schelling’s writings to attempt to make the case this moment names that which is encountered in Heidegger’s thinking of the clearing. I hope that show that the unprethinkable names that which one arrives at insofar as they think along with the disclosure of nature in its own

movement. In other words insofar as we think according to the mandates of the matter itself, *die Sache selbst*, we are led to think of this unprethinkable—*die nie aufgehende Rest*, i.e., the remainder which can never surge forth, yet serves as the ground of all that which we are given to think. Heidegger, in his pointing to the mystery and the play of revealing and concealing has already given us our bearing, insofar as he names the origin of history as the naming of being as *phusis*—nature—which he translates into German as *aufgehendes Anwesen*, i.e., upsurgent presencing (GA9, 190). This upsurgent presencing, or what Merleau-Ponty calls, the “pure, unmotivated surging-forth” which is nature, is always simultaneously haunted by the barbarian principle, the brute fact of existence, the remainder which never surges up, yet which is the *Grund* of all of our thinking. But it is a *Grund* in a peculiar sense—the sense that the *Ereignis* is the *Grund* of being and time. If this claim can be substantiated then we must admit that Schelling’s thinking, specifically in *Ages of the World*, is already underway towards the other beginning. My claim will be that the encounter with lightness of the determinations of being can just as easily be attuned by this gravity as it can by this lightness—yet we may encounter it more clearly by passing through Schelling’s *Schleier der Schwermut*—the veil of melancholy—which he says covers over all of nature (I/7, 400).

CHAPTER IV

SCHELLING'S THINKING OF THE DISSEMBLING SUBJECT OF FREEDOM

I concluded the previous chapter with the suggestion that Schelling gives a rigorous articulation of what Heidegger has called “the other beginning” of philosophy, insofar as that other beginning is defined by the willingness to hold the groundlessness of being open. My objective in this chapter is to make a case for this claim taking our starting point in Heidegger’s reading of Hölderlin and the relationship between thinking and poetry, insofar as the task of these two domains is to say being—which for later Heidegger can only mean *Ereignis*—and name the holy. I will lay the stakes of Schelling’s questioning of “eternal freedom” via Heidegger’s reading of Hölderlin’s language of the holy, insofar as both of “eternal freedom” and “the holy,” in some sense, name nature as that which is eternally past. I will then lay out what the eternal past means for Schelling. In order to do so I will deal with a number of Schelling’s texts from his middle period, particularly the *Ages of the World*, the *Initia Philosophiae Universae* (which I will refer to as the *Erlanger Lectures*), and the *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom and Matters Connected Therewith* (which I will refer to as the *Freedom* essay).

My claim will be that nature and this eternal past are ways that Schelling names freedom. I will show that freedom serves a double role in Schelling’s corpus: it indicates the matter and manner of thinking. Schelling’s thinking of freedom as the subject which, “*Passing through all things and not being any of them*,” that is, being no thing such that it could not be

another” (Schelling, 1969: 16), leads us to think of freedom as the ground of all thought, which as ground, is fundamentally unthinkable due to its perpetual dissemblance; this is the matter, the *Sache* of Schelling’s thinking and the majority of this chapter will focus on this theme. It is unthinkable insofar as it is the condition of, and hence prior to, thinkability—Schelling will refer to it as *das unvordenkliche Seyn*, the unprethinkable being.²³ In light of this, I will continue to articulate what manner of thinking—or, what kind of philosophical attunement—is necessary for us, or for Schelling, to arrive at the thought of freedom as the unprethinkable being; this manner of thinking will be introduced and hinted at throughout this chapter to be returned to in full in Chapter V.

I intend the next three chapters to have a spiral structure that builds upon itself as it progresses, thus much ground that is covered in this chapter will need to be recovered in Chapter V and Chapter VI with attention to the role that thinking plays in Schelling’s account of freedom. I claim that when Schelling says that whoever wishes to think “the incoercible, the ungraspable, the truly infinite . . . must raise themselves to this level” (Schelling, 1969: 17), he is echoing the demand of the phenomenological *ethos* that we encounter in his *Naturphilosophie* and throughout Heidegger’s writings, but now in terms of an engagement with being as both abyss and plenitude—or better, an abyssal plenitude. It is this modulation of being as abyss and plenitude that will occupy the entirety of this chapter

²³ Rodolphe Gasché has done more than enough work to elucidate the philosophical purchase of this move that Schelling makes—though Gasché emphasizes the presence of this move towards that which is the condition of the possibility of reflection, but which, in turn, cannot be reflected upon, in the work of Jacques Derrida. I am fond of Gasché’s articulation of this unprethinkable ground as the ‘the tain of the mirror’—stealing the phrase from Derrida’s *Dissemination*. Gasché explains that, “Derrida’s philosophy, rather than being a philosophy of reflection, is engaged in a systematic exploration of that dull surface without which no reflection and no specular and speculative play would be possible, but which at the same time has no place and no part in reflection’s scintillating play” (Gasché, 1986: 6). I use Gasché’s language throughout this chapter and hence wish to acknowledge the debt up front; I also wish to show—if I make a compelling case that this is a viable way to read Schelling—that Schelling presages numerous conversations that dominant the philosophical discourse of the twentieth century.

and it will serve to show Heidegger's limitations as a reader of the history of philosophy insofar as he is committed to his notion of epochal determinations of being. I will argue that Schelling is not merely a "heat-lightning of a new beginning", but rather a full-blown thunderstorm.

Section I Unprethinkability and Unpredictability

Let us take our cue for this initial section from Heidegger. In his *What Are Poets For...*, he investigates the poet's—particularly Hölderlin's—engagement with the "holy." Discussing the poet's engagement with the holy, which has already been discussed as the site that is left absent after the fleeing of the Gods, he writes,

With this lack [*Fehl*], the ground as grounding for the world is missing...The ground is the soil for taking root and standing. The age of the world [*Weltalter*], for which the ground is missing, hangs in the abyss...In the age of the world's night [*Im Weltalter der Weltnacht*], the abyss of the world must be experienced and endured [*ausgestanden*]. But for this it is necessary that there are those who reach into the abyss. (GA5, 269)

The language and context of this passage are striking, to say the least. In an essay on Hölderlin, Schelling's one-time roommate at the Tübingen *Stift*, Heidegger explicitly employs the title of one of Schelling's most famous philosophical works—*Die Weltalter*—numerous times. Not only does the title of Schelling's unfinished *magnum opus* recur in this essay, but the philosophical matter at issue resounds with the beginning of the 1815 version of Schelling's *Ages of the World* with astonishing consonance.

Heidegger is insisting that the task for those of us who live in an age in which the God's have fled—or for us thinkers, in which epochal principles no longer reign—is to take stock of this lack of the God's as a lack, and to not permit this lack to be covered over. In

light of this lack we find ourselves hanging in the abyss. This epoch, in which we hang into the abyss, is described as the “age of the world’s night,” a night in which, one can only assume, “the abyss of the world must be experienced and endured,” because only in such a night could it be encountered and endured at all. Yet even in such a situation, such an epoch in which the God’s have fled and we are left only with a lack of determinacy or mandate—insofar as the holy, as the poetic naming of the *Sache* elsewhere named as *Ereignis*, is the site from which the *nomos* of being is dispensed to us (GA9, 360)—we need those “who reach into the abyss.” For Heidegger, this figure who does the reaching is the poet; in particular, it is Hölderlin.

Schelling’s initial assertion of the world’s night occurs in under a different guise, yet indicates the same demand. At the beginning of *Ages of the World*, he insists that the matter for the highest science—which we are to assume he is undertaking—is what is “primordially living...nothing precedes or is exterior to this primordial life that might have determined it” (Schelling, 2000: xxxv). Insofar as this primordial life has nothing outside of itself or prior to it that could determine it, it is *ohne Grund*, without ground; unless, of course, it is its own ground. But what it may mean to say such a thing—that this primordial life, this freedom is its own ground (and hence *auto-nomos*, autonomous)—always remains a question for Schelling. It is precisely the nature, or essence [*Wesen*] of this primordial life that Schelling sets out to investigate in this text—and arguably in all of the texts of his middle period. Here, he suggests that the proper site at which to investigate this primordial life is in “the deepest night of the past” (Schelling, 2000: xxxvi). Is this the night of the world in which “the abyss of the world,” as Heidegger says, “must be experienced and suffered”? I will argue that it is, and if I can make a case for this fact, then it is clear that Hölderlin is not the

only member of the Tübingen trio who was able to reach into this abyss. In order to understand what this may mean, we must begin by investigating Schelling's understanding of this "night of the past"—and thus his understanding of the past as such.

Prior to turning to Schelling's articulation of the eternal past in the second section of this chapter, which I will attempt to show appears in a certain way in which he thinks nature and what he, in his *Erlanger Lectures*, calls "eternal freedom," it will be more than instructive for us to turn to some Heidegger's meditations on the holy in his writings on Hölderlin. First, it is important to recall that Heidegger says, "The thinker says being. The poet names the holy" (GA9, 312). Our initial task is to establish some sense of what this might mean.

In an extended excursus on the holy, Ben Vedder explains: "the holy is not an attribute of the divine, but the dimension in which the godlike can appear" (Vedder, 2005: 143). What role have the gods, or what is godlike, played throughout history and what is there to be gained from reaching in, holding open, and suffering their absence? It is clear that the gods have been the origins of directives, the site from the proclamations of law for communities have originated; in other words, gods have been and have laid foundations. Gods have served as the means by which particular peoples, places, or historical epochs gain their *Sinn*, both their meaning and their direction. When the gods speak, they give things, beings as a whole, a kind of coherence, a kind of clarity through density. As Richard Polt puts it, Heidegger thinks about the gods "in terms of the existential possibilities that inform a people's interpretation of itself and of the world around it. The gods bring to life the most important existential possibilities for a community—the "immeasurable possibilities" that

orient our concerns and establish the significance of everything” (Polt, 2006: 208).²⁴

Historical humanity has taken their directive—and ironically—found their freedom and vocation through god’s determinations. Hence, following Schürmann, the god’s *dichten*: they thicken things, they make things dense.²⁵ Insofar as this thickening takes place, the question “what is to be done?” is always already answered even in the asking of it: how we would question and the kinds of answers we would either desire or anticipate to such a question hinge upon beings already having been determined in some meaningful array.

In *Wozu Dichter?* Heidegger offers numerous answers to Hölderlin’s question that prompts this essay, but all of these answers circulate around one specific claim. Heidegger says exactly what poets are for in desolate times: “To be a poet in impoverished times means: to attend, singing, to the trace of the fugitive gods. Thereby the poet says the holy to the time of the night of the world. Thus, in Hölderlin’s language, the night of the world is the holy night” (GA5, 272). We have already seen Heidegger characterize this night of the world as *abgrundlich*, *abesos*, without base, abyssal²⁶; the task of the poet in such

²⁴ A few pages later Polt offers an extended example of what this might mean: “A tribe celebrates the New Year with a day of dancing and feasting; on this day, they plant a tree in the center of their village and sacrifice a goat at the base of the tree ... if the gods are really at work here, they may be at work not as beings at all, but as sources of the *import* of beings: the day and the sacrifice, the tree and the goat, make sense in terms of the gods ... The tribe’s gods allow it to be a people—a community that shares an understanding of what matters and why” (Polt, 2006: 212).

²⁵ Regarding the being’s poietic character, and thinking *dichten* as to thicken, Schürmann writes: “Only in his last writings does he [Heidegger] raise the question of presencing as that of “loci.” These loci are the historical economies. In each moment they constitute a field of presencing. Across the epochs presencing articulates itself differently, sets itself to work (*poien*) differently. The ‘poietic’ character of presencing is what Heidegger calls *Dichtung*, “poetry.” “Poetry that thinks is in truth the topology of being.” Needless to say, this has nothing to do with the art of composing verse, or even with human language. “The poietic character of thinking” is only the echo, the reverberation of presencing and *its* poietic character. Presencing crystallizes (*dichten* means “to thicken,” to render dense) into successive orders. Conversely, these epochal crystallizations determine the kind of words we speak and write in. The self-ordering of presencing thus must be understood as the primordial language” (Schürmann, 1992: 12).

²⁶ I am compelled by John Sallis’ defense of translating *Abgrund* as abyss, as abyss derives from the Greek *abesos*, without bottom, just as *Abgrund* suggests in German. Of course, the *Ab-* prefix in German usually has more of

impoverished—or abyssal—times is to reach in, hold open, and suffer this abyssal character of this age of the world. We now find him saying that what the poet encounters insofar as they hold open and withstand this abyss is trace of the gods who have fled. It is precisely this trace of the gods, as the trail they have left behind in their fleeing, that Heidegger names the holy. A poet is able to encounter the holy, the trace of the fugitive gods, only insofar as the gods have fled. As Robert Bernasconi says, “it is because “holy names are lacking” that Hölderlin can name the holy” (Bernasconi, 1985: 42). The holy as such, the space in which a god would appear, strictly speaking, can only be encountered as such when it is vacant. Or to put it more boldly: poets can only poetize the holy insofar as the thickening that is the proper activity of the gods has not come to pass.

Just as we encounter *Ereignis* in its withdrawal—and accordingly in its unprethinkability, though we have yet to stake out what exactly that means for Schelling—we encounter the holy as we can experience the site of the donation of a *nomos* for a community—a *nomos* that would bind a community together, thicken it, make it dense, restrict the general economy of being such that humans could find a *nomos* for their *oikos*—insofar as that *nomos* is lacking. If the *nomos* were not lacking, the holy as such would be unencountered, it would be indescribable, one would not even be able to encounter it such that he or she would have to struggle for the words with which to call it forth and name it, as for Heidegger “*nomos* is not only law, but rather, more primordially, the directive secured in the sending of being” (GA9, 361). The holy, as the site from which such a directive contained in sending or dispensation of being would be given would be un-dictable

a sense of pulling away, and not a simple negation, but Heidegger himself is emphatic at the beginning of *Wozu Dichter?* that we should hear the word in this essay as an instance of the bottom dropping out. (Sallis, 2004: cf. 92).

because the act of thickening which would occur in light of the presence of a god would be the condition of diction as such, i.e., the condition of *dichten* as the act of poetizing. It would be to say that the act of poetizing would first depend upon beings having been made dense by their belonging to an economy of presencing. The site from which such a thickening would take place would thus be pre-diction. In its being pre-diction, a condition for our articulation, it would forever escape the capacity of a language that received its directives, laws, and determinations from it to describe it as it was prior to the dispensation or assignment of a *nomos*. Thus it would be unpredictable in the manner in which *Ereignis* is unprethinkable. To employ Derridean language, the unthinkability of that which is the condition of the possibility of reflection, but which, in turn, cannot be reflected upon, shows us the limits of transcendental philosophy by exposing the simultaneity of the conditions of both possibility and impossibility of the success of such an endeavor. It is both *vor*, in that it is a condition and prior to thinking, and *un*, in that in being such a condition it is by necessity unthinkable. It is precisely the lack of participation of this condition of possibility in the play of reflection, or the self-description of any particular restricted economy (of presencing), that makes *Ereignis* and the holy surface as matters for thinking and poetizing respectively.

Looking at the structure of the descriptions of *Ereignis* from the previous chapter and the brief explanation of the holy that I have just given, it should be clear that these two phenomena are extraordinarily similar. That being the case, why would Heidegger bother to distinguish between these two *Sache*? I have already answered the question to some extent: the task of the thinker is to say being—or recognize the appropriative character of being in light of encounter with *Ereignis*—whereas the task of the poet is to name the holy, insofar as the poet's task is to announce the fleeing of the gods by attending to their trace. Given that

Heidegger asserts that, “Thinking, obedient to the voice of being, seeks from it the word from out of which the truth of being comes to speech,” and that “the naming of the poet is of a similar ancestry” (GA9, 312), we should be left asking, why exactly do these two vocations need to be held apart? There are inevitably far more reasons for this bifurcation than I can attend to here. At present, I would only like to point to one of these reasons, which, to put it simply, is Heidegger’s commitment to being-historical thinking and the belief that philosophers, are fundamentally limited by the epochal determinations of being in which they find themselves. For Heidegger, such a constraint is in large part due to the limitations of philosophical discourse insofar as that discourse is metaphysical. Dennis Schmidt explains:

Metaphysics is the name of the force behind the abuse and destruction of language ... The language of metaphysics, a language that submits itself in advance to the logic of the idea, freezes and immobilizes the very event—what Heidegger called *das Ereignis*—that Heidegger argues is most in need of being thought in its vitality. (Schmidt, 2005: 172)

As Schmidt is quick to note, the history of being, though defined by forgetfulness of *das Ereignis*, is still pregnant with possibilities through which we may be able to engage the truth of being. He notes, “Hölderlin’s work is repeatedly designated as something of a model for just how it is that language can be brought to say faithfully the event that is most in need of thought” (Schmidt, 2005: 173). The simplest reason for this was that Hölderlin was a poet: as a poet he was able to speak outside of onto-theology, outside the strictures of philosophical language—and thus the boundaries for thinking that being committed to such a discursive array necessitate—did not tie him down the way they did his Tübingen Stift roommates. As Vedder says, “onto-theology...needs the poets to get an entrance to the holy” (Vedder, 2005: 151). Yet, if I am right, and the structure of unprethinkability that

describes *Ereignis* and the structure unpredictability that describes the holy holds, than is it not the case that Schelling was, at nearly the same time as Hölderlin, attending to exactly this *Sache*?

In reading Hölderlin's *Wie Wenn Am Feiertage*, Heidegger is quick to note that, "Hölderlin names nature 'the holy'" (GA4, 58). Elsewhere, in *On the Beginning*, Heidegger explains that, "nature" and "the holy ... name the most proper history of the other beginning" (GA70, 157). What nature is this? Heidegger specifies that it is not nature in the sense of a domain of objects, nor is it simply a one-sided interpretation of the Greek thinking of *phusis* which Heidegger explains as follows in *On the Essence of Truth*: "Beings as a whole reveal themselves as *phusis*, "nature," which at this point does not yet mean a particular domain of beings, but rather beings as such as a whole, and specifically in the sense of upsurgent presencing [*aufgehenden Anwesens*]" (GA9, 190). Hölderlin does not think of nature in this poem as exclusively the upsurgence of presencing. Rather, Heidegger claims, "In its essence, Hölderlin's word "nature," in this poem, poetizes [*dichtet*] according to the concealed truth of inceptual ground-word *phusis*" (GA4, 57). What does this mean? For Heidegger it means that when Hölderlin names nature, he names what is constantly present, but not as a being present at hand. Rather it is what is constantly present in its being-prior: "Nature is more timely [*zeitiger*] than "the Ages", because as the wonderfully all-present it already, in advance, gives the clearing to what is actual, the clearing in whose openness whatever is actual is first able to appear" (GA4, 59). Heidegger himself at least implicitly affirms this conjunction of nature in the holy in his analysis of *Machenschaft* in the *Beiträge*. Heidegger explains that under the domain of machination, nature is interpreted according *techné*, such that *phusis* is thought of primarily as a mode of production. In our

encounter with the truth of being, with *Ereignis*, “‘nature’ is not set back, rather it is transformed in an original manner” (GA65, 32). What is this original nature? We have already made clear that for Heidegger it is the play of revealing and concealing, he also says that originally—or at least that is what I take his assertion “it was once” prior to the domination of machination—it was “the site of the moment of the arrival and the abode of the gods who rested in the essencing of beyng when this site was still *phusis*” (GA65, 277). How else should we receive this assertion of nature in its original dimension than as a way of naming the holy?

Thus, as Heraclitus says, *phusis kruptesthai philei*, this nature is present in its constant withdrawal; in its essence—the essence that Hölderlin’s word “nature” poetizes in accord with and according to—its upsurge is simultaneous with its hiding. As has been said repeatedly, nature as the holy is thus the site in which gods would dwell, but given their fleeing, their fugitive status, Hölderlin is able to poetize the holy in all of its unprepoetizability, its unpredictability, insofar as he attends to the traces of that which is always prior, which in “the history of being must be proclaimed as *Er-ignis* and is thought as the in-between” (GA70, 157).

Given that Hölderlin once lived with one of the most famous thinkers of the question of nature, it would seem unlikely, that he—Schelling—would go unmentioned in Heidegger’s excursus. He does not. He is mentioned as one of many thinkers who would think of nature as “particular domain of beings.” We are told that if we follow Schelling in his thinking of nature, we will be misguided: “if one wanted to posit what, in this poem, is named “nature” as “identical” with “spirit” in the sense of “identity” as Hölderlin’s friend Schelling thought it around this same time, this would be to misconstrue nature” (GA4, 56).

It may just be that I am too fond of Schelling for my own good, but this assertion gave me pause, to say the least. I have already noted the uncanny resemblance of the language that Heidegger uses at the beginning of *Wozu Dichter?* to Schelling's language in the *Weltalter*. Let me turn now to another, even more striking, congruity.

Recall that Heidegger names *phusis* as *aufgehenden Anwesens*, upsurgent presencing, in *On the Essence of Truth*. As I have just finished explaining, for Heidegger, this upsurgent presencing is only half of the necessary play of *phusis*, as it is the play of revealing and concealing. It is being concealed insofar as it is that which opens up the possibility of the revelation of beings. The *Spur*, the trace, of the gods that Hölderlin attends to, singing, in his poetizing, brings us back to an encounter with the necessity of concealment or withdrawal for revelation. These traces themselves, though present, bring us back to the condition of presencing that in itself does not presence. What else is this than the that which "in things is the incomprehensible basis of reality, the never upsurgent remainder [*nie aufgehende Rest*], that which with the greatest effort cannot be dissolved in the intellect, but rather eternally remains in the ground" (I/7, 360)? What else is Hölderlin's naming of nature as the holy in light of attending to the *Spur* of the fugitive gods than a variant manner of attending to the same *Sache* that Schelling here describes as the *Rest*, the irregularity or the rulelessness of the ground prior to the primordial decision that makes reality possible as the play between ground and existence? It is precisely this unruly ground before the ground that Wirth describes as the inexhaustibility of nature's productivity, its unprethinkability and unpredictability: "It is ... the unfathomable mystery of productivity's inexhaustibility and its *unvordenkliche* or unpredictable capacity to reconfigure the oblique manifestations of its plenitude" (Schelling, 2000: xxii).

Schelling refers to nature's productivity as the subject of movement that is the condition of life and the condition of philosophy which is, "*passing through all things and not being any of them*" (Schelling, 1969: 16). He specifies, much like Heidegger would do one hundred and thirty years later, that though this movement is the principle of philosophy, this unprethinkable and unpredictable productivity cannot be captured in a supreme law, though this is what most philosophers have done:

...philosophy was seen as a chain of laws which followed from one another. It was imagined that there must have been a supreme link in this chain—a first law, from which a second and again and third follows, etc. Thus Cartesius has *cogito ergo sum* as supreme law. Fichte: I is I. In a living system alone, which is not the consequence of law, but rather is the moments of progression and development, there can be no account of any such supreme principle. (Schelling, 1969: 16)

Like Heidegger in his *Onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics*, Schelling criticizes (though it is unclear whether or not we could call what Heidegger is up to criticism) previous philosophers for being committed to particular principles that enable the thinkability of beings as a whole—even if that principle is God. For Schelling, "*according to its nature*" this principle, nature's productivity, or eternal freedom, "is not static, and even with God it cannot stand still" (Schelling, 1969: 27). How is this any different from what Heidegger sees in Hölderlin's naming of nature as the holy as it is prior to all that is active, even the gods (GA4, 59)? Or from Heidegger's own assertions regarding the necessity of rethinking *phusis* in light of our encounter with *Ereignis* in his *Beiträge*? Just as Schelling would say God can be God only because the absolute subject as eternal freedom passes through him, Heidegger hears Hölderlin say that the gods are divine only because they inhabit the holy. That which is holy, that which is eternally free, as Hölderlin himself says in *Wie Wenn am Feiertage*, is the holy chaos out which fixed laws are begotten. He writes:

But now day breaks! I waited and saw it come,
 And what I saw, the holy shall be my word,
 For she, she herself, who is older than the ages
 And higher than the gods of Orient and Occident,
 Nature has now awoken amid the clang of arms,
 And from high Aether down to the low abyss,
 According to fixed law, begotten, as in the past, on holy Chaos,
 Delights, the all-creative,
 Delights in self-renewal. (Hölderlin, 2004: 462)²⁷

Just as Hesiod would have it when he sang, “First of all there came Chaos ... from Chaos was born Erebus, the dark, and black Night” (Hesiod, 1991: 130), this holy chaos that is older than the ages of the world, the chaos that can only be encountered in the world’s night in its perpetually receding priority, is that which Hölderlin and Schelling name nature. A nature that is prior to our attempts to bring particular conceptual apparatus’ to bear upon it, prior to and conditioning of our ability to engage beings as a whole in terms of names of being. Why does Heidegger ignore this? Why does he insist that only the poet in the other beginning can “prophesy [*vor-denkt*] the up until now unprethinkable [*bislang Unvordenkliche*] and his poetry opens the time-space for the first time” (GA70, 159)? This is a question that may need to be answered more thoroughly later in this chapter, but for moment I would argue that Schelling gives us a provisional answer as to why Heidegger misses Schelling’s attending, thinkingly, to the remainder of the eternal to past. Schelling writes:

²⁷ I made very minor adjustments to Hamburger’s translation. In German, this poem reads:

Jetzt aber tagts! Ich harrt und sah es kommen,
 Und was ich sah, das Heilige sei mein Wort.
 Denn sie, sie selbst, die alter denn die Zeiten
 Und über die Götter des Abends und Orients ist,
 Die Natur is jetzt mit Waffenklang erwacht
 Und hoch vom Aether bis zum Abgrund nieder
 Nach vestem Ganze, wie einst, aus heiligem Chaos gezeugt,
 Fühlt neu die Begeisterung sich,
 Die Allerschaffende wieder.

Since the beginning, many have desired to penetrate this silent realm of the past prior to the world in order to get, in actual comprehension, behind the great process of which they are in part cooperative members and in part sympathetic members. But most of them lacked the requisite humility and self-denial because they wanted to tackle everything at once with supreme concepts. (Schelling, 2000: 63)

As Wirth explains, “For Schelling, all philosophical positions, that grand history of the great western isms, is a history of clotting, of inhibitions, of stoppages, and hence of trauma, of sickness and of evil” (Wirth, 2003: 164). This would be opposed to Schelling’s own account of the experience of naked existence [*bloße Daseyn*]:

Naked existence without consideration of its kind and form, to the extent that it is beheld as such, must appear as a miracle [*Wunder*] and fill the soul [*Gemüth*] with wonder: as it was undeniably this observance of pure existence that, in the earliest intimations, assaulted [*überfiel*] souls with horror and a kind of holy terror [*einer Art von heiligem Schrecken*]. (I/7, 200)

On Schelling’s own account, then, the experience of wonder and holy terror are potentially synonymous, precisely because *Grund* is, “an original opacity, or refusal to appear and unveil itself” (Hadot, 2006: 302). Frighteningly powerful and instructive as it may be, Heidegger’s insistence upon epochally-determined sendings of being throughout the long history of metaphysics force him to read Schelling as a metaphysician—who as such could never “stand in an essential ... relation to the poet” (GA70, 159)—whereas Hölderlin is able to be taken as the roommate who shows us the true essence of both poetizing and thinking.

While I agree with Peter Warnek that Heidegger’s “question of the history of the truth of being is not supposed to be simply *applied* to Schelling’s work and thought as a kind of hermeneutic “method” that promises to unlock the truth of the text,” I am still *post facto* suspicious of Heidegger’s engagement with history, precisely because it generates readings that appear *as if* he did seek to “uncover the (more or less hidden) ontological doctrines” (Warnek, 2005: 169). Even if Heidegger approaches Schelling with a care and attentiveness

to the *Sache* of his text that was unseen prior to Heidegger's engagement with the *Freedom* essay, I still worry that he may find, at least in part, what he puts in. Even if it is true that all great thinkers—and I contend that Schelling, on Heidegger's terms is a thinker, not a philosopher *qua* metaphysician—at bottom, fundamentally misunderstand one another, it may be the case that Schelling was more prepared, or at least more desirous, to give up such supreme isms as we encounter in Heidegger's being-historical thinking—though Heidegger would of course roll over in his grave at such an assertion—and perhaps that thinking itself. Maybe Schelling was more able than Heidegger to enter into the releasement, the *Gelassenheit* that defines the activity of thinking for the both of them.

Section II Schelling's Eternal Past

Now that I have laid some groundwork for a reading of Schelling that take seriously his status as a thinker who thinks beyond the strictures of what Heidegger will often call the long history of metaphysics, it is necessary to lay out Schelling's thinking of the eternal past and its connection to "eternal freedom" in a much more rigorous manner. For Schelling, it is clear that the past that is at issue in his *Ages of the World* is not the historical past. Using the language of a certain strain of psycho-analysis, one could say that it is a past that has never crossed the present. It is not last week, it is not last year, it is not the last millennium, it is not even pre-historic. Well, in a certain sense it could be said to be pre-historic, but this pre-history would have to be thought of as the history before history—even before the distinction between recorded history and the time and events that elapsed before humans began leaving traces of themselves behind, written or otherwise. Rather, this past—particularly this "deepest night of the past"—is "the beginning of the ages" (Schelling,

2000: xxxvi). Judith Norman explains, “This is an odd conception of the past: the past is not just the chronological but the transcendental ground of the present, the condition of its possibility. This means that the past is not a past present, it was never a ‘now’” (Norman, 2004: 97).

What are we to make of this beginning before the beginning of history? Slavoj Žižek explains that for Schelling, “*the true Beginning is not at the beginning*, there is something that precedes the Beginning itself—a rotary motion whose vicious cycle is broken, in a gesture analogous to the cutting of the Gordian knot, by the beginning proper, that is, the primordial act of decision” (Žižek, 1996: 13). The question of decision as primordial act must be left aside for now, to be returned to in full in the next chapter. For now, we must focus on the question of this rotary motion. To put it most simply, it is God prior to creation; God prior to having decided to create the world. It is important to note, however, that this is a peculiar deity. It is a deity that is at least dual, which is to say, it is a deity that is what it is insofar as it is multiple. At the beginning, God is not one, rather God is the unity of “two principles [that] are already in what is necessary of God: the outpouring, outstretching, self-giving being, and an equivalently eternal force of selfhood, of retreat into itself, of Being in itself. That being and this force are both already God itself, without God’s assistance” (Schelling, 2000: 6). These two principles, the expansive and contractive force in God, what Schelling will call the potencies, the A^1 and the A^2 , compete with one another for priority. It is important to Schelling to note that “each has its own root and neither can be deduced from the other,” as he wishes to point that “already in that which is primordially living, there is a doubling that has come down, through many stages, to that which has

determined itself as what appears to us as light and darkness, masculine and feminine, spiritual and corporeal” (Schelling, 2000: 6).

Why is Schelling so concerned to point out this original duality, this original bifurcation? Like so many questions that I have posed throughout this project, this question can have no one, exhaustive answer, and the second portion of my answer, regarding the question of human freedom must wait until the next chapter to come to full fruition. Yet, I think, if we attend to this question in light of Hölderlin’s naming of nature as chaos alongside Heidegger’s insistence that *phusis* is the play of revealing and concealing, we can come to some interesting conclusions. The question then becomes: does Schelling give us reason to read this bifurcation in God as a having anything to do with the chaotic character of nature? The answer can only be an emphatic yes, but this chaos is something we must seek in its priority, both temporal (whatever that might mean when we are speaking of an eternal past) and logical.

In discussing the play of contraction and expansion that defines what Žižek calls the deadlock of the rotary drives, Schelling explains that this play is “the beginning of that alternating movement that goes through the entirety of visible nature, of the eternal contraction of the eternal re-expansion, of the universal ebb and flow” (Schelling, 2000: 21). For Schelling, this play of expansion and contraction—or we could say the play of revealing and concealing—is something that we can encounter insofar as we follow out the lifecycle of a plant. The growth of tree, for example, hinges upon the expansion of seed that is the result of the contracting of a prior tree into that seed. The roots of growth and expansion are not present and visible to us in a tree’s bearing fruit; rather those roots are only truly encountered when one follows the process out as a whole. This universal ebb and flow, this

“eternal exhaling and inhaling, a constant interchange between life and death” (Schelling, 2000: 21) is precisely what Heidegger has called *phusis*. What is most important about this example is that Schelling notes that, “visible nature, in particular and as a whole, is an allegory of this perpetually advancing and retreating movement” (Schelling, 2000: 21). In other words, what we encounter in this tree can give us access to the nature of being as such in its primordially, in its eternal past, and our initial glimpse into this should suggest that being in its primordially, at least in our encounter with it, will be at least dual.

How does Schelling describe being in its primordially? We have already seen that for Schelling this is nothing other than the productivity of nature, or as he says repeatedly in the *Erlanger Lectures*, eternal freedom. He presages this description of productivity as eternal freedom in the *Ages of the World*. Here he writes: “An inner feeling tells us that the true, eternal, freedom only dwells above being” (Schelling, 2000: 23). He insists that this is “not divine nature or substance, but the devouring ferocity of purity that a person is able to approach only with an equal purity. Since all being goes up in it as if in flames, it is necessarily unapproachable to anyone still embroiling in being” (Schelling, 2000: 25).

Schelling thus echoes his assertion that I presented earlier from his *Erlanger Lectures* wherein he insists that this play of contraction and expansion that is nature thought beyond either visible nature or divine nature is something that cannot be encountered so long as one is committed to being, or committed to thinking being in terms of supreme principles that would capture or isolate the movement that is essential to knowledge (Schelling, 2000: 4).

In his *Erlanger Lectures*, in and numerous other texts from his middle and late periods, Schelling will also refer to that which is beyond being, “a sublimity beyond being and not-being” (Schelling, 2000: 27), as a *Seinskönnen*, a being possible, which he describes as

“possibility for the sake of possibility, possibility without intention or object” (Schelling, 1969: 22). This openness, this possibility, that may demand to take on a form, but demands no form in particular, can clearly be seen as the site which is either manifest as or filled up by any or all names for being, gods, or principles that would serve as the grounding by which a particular configurations of beings becomes thinkable at all, in a sense, it must precede the very bifurcation of the expansive and contractive principles in God. As such, it is only encounterable in its infinite mutability and malleability, Schelling writes:

This incomprehensible but not imperceptible being, always ready to overflow and yet always held again, and which along grants to all things the full charm, gleam, and glint of life, is that which is at the same time most manifest and most concealed. Because it only shows itself amidst a constant mutability it draws all the more as the glimpse of the actual being that lies concealed within all things of this world and which simply awaits its liberation. (Schelling, 2000: 60).

Yet it is a liberation that as such can never come, because if it were to show itself as itself it would no longer be itself as such. Things can only show themselves, or be objects for reflection, insofar as they manifest themselves as present and thus that which makes reflection possible cannot appear as an object for reflection without begging the question of the enabling condition of that instance of reflection. That which is itself only as pure possibility can never show itself in any form of actuality. Rather, it can only be encountered as that which withdraws from this actuality; it withdraws insofar as it both precedes it and makes it possible. As Andrew Bowie points out: “the difficulty in understanding Schelling’s position is evident: the demand is to think something unthinkable” (Bowie, 1993: 135). Yet, it is important to note that it is not just unthinkable, but unprethinkable. Schelling himself explains precisely what it is that he is trying to think: the emergence of rationality out of chaos. “The entire world, as it were, lies caught in reason, but the question is: How did it

come into this net? (Therefore there is still in the world something other and something more than mere reason—even something that strives beyond these boundaries).” (Schelling, 1972: 222). The question thus becomes, as absurd as this may seem, how exactly does Schelling go about trying to think this both un-and-pre-thinkable freedom? And potentially more importantly, why? I will attempt to answer these two questions in turn.

Section III

A Tangent: There Are Three Kinds of People

Very near the end of the third draft of the *Ages of the World*, Schelling makes what may seem to be a rather peculiar attempt to carve up all people in the world into three distinct categories insofar as they relate to that which is excessive to, and pushes on the boundaries of, the net of reason in which the world is trapped. Schelling explains, “there is a kind of person in which there is no madness whatsoever” (Schelling, 2000: 103). Such people, whom Schelling categorizes as “sober spirits” and “men of intellect,” are “uncreative people incapable of procreation.” It is hard not to hear Nietzsche at this point:

All that philosophers have handled for millennia were conceptual mummies; nothing that is actual has come out of their hands alive. When they worship, they kill, they stuff; these gentlemanly idolaters of concepts—they become a danger to the life of all things when they worship. Death, change, age, even procreation and growth, are objections for them—refutations even. (KGA, VII/III: 67)

For Schelling, these “men of intellect” or “dead intellectuals” do not engage a world that is alive, precisely because they do not tarry with the madness or chaos that lies prior to our ability to conceptualize. Instead, they stultify, isolate, categorize; they take up the world as dead matter to be tarried with. This is due to the fact that “the whole of modern European philosophy from its beginning (in Descartes) has this common lack: nature is not present for it [*für sie nicht vorhanden ist*] and it lacks a living ground” (I/7, 356).

For whom, then, does nature exist? For what kind of people does the world have a living ground? Schelling answers that it is in the “two other kinds of persons in which there really is madness” (Schelling, 2000: 103). Such an assertion must be heard in a particular way, and I will present two caveats about this sense of madness prior to describing these other two kinds of people. First, it should be noted that when Schelling is describing madness here, I think it ought to be clear that he is describing that which is excessive or prior to determination by any particular rational structure—he does not, I think, have in mind someone who has “lost their mind”, so to speak (though that could be a consequence as we shall say). Second, it is even more important to note that Schelling begins his description of his three kinds of people by asserting that not only can nothing great be accomplished without “a touch of madness,” rather “nothing great can be accomplished without constant solicitation of madness, which should always be overcome, but should never be utterly lacking” (Schelling, 2000: 103).

So what of these two kinds of people? Let us hear Schelling out:

There is one kind of person that governs madness and precisely in this overwhelming shows the highest force of the intellect. The other kind of person is governed by madness and is someone who is really mad. One cannot say, strictly speaking, that madness originates in them. It only comes forth as something that is always there (for without constant solicitation of it, there would be no consciousness) and that is not now suppressed and governed by a higher force. (Schelling, 2000: 104)

Recalling that for Schelling all things emerge and exist only insofar as there is a constant tension and exchange between the forces of contraction and expansion, it is always possible for a person or a body to fall too far to one side of this equilibrium. In a body, at least in Schelling’s conception of disease, if a particular organ asserts itself as the center of activity of the body, that body will fall ill. Each organ must remain appropriately self-interested while

at the same time interacting in equilibrium with all other organs in the body. As Schelling says,

Doctors distinguish between particular systems in the human organism as well. Whoever suffers from one of these systems, i.e., if one of these is particularly obtrusive, that person is thereby bound to that system, inhibited in his freedom, and quite properly a slave to it. A healthy person feels none of the systems in particular. (Schelling, 1969: 12)

This play of turning inwards and outwards at the same time is what guarantees a healthy body, and according to this lengthy passage from *Ages of the World*, a healthy intellectual life as well. The person who becomes completely mad is the person who is not able to temper or regulate their solicitation of madness; they are the person who is taken over by the chaos at the heart of nature. One may want to say, they are the person in whom there is *too much* life; or who, while holding open the abyss, decided to dive in rather than enduring or recoiling from it.

But what of this mediate person? This figure who is able to solicit madness, but at the same time overcome it? Who is this person? Ironically, Schelling spends the least amount of time discussing this middle figure, given that I believe it is the most important of the three for understanding what Schelling thinks the task of the philosopher is. In fact, I would go so far as to say that this middle figure, the person who can solicit madness while at the same time overcoming it, is the Schellingian philosopher. I will attempt to make good on this assertion by pursuing two thoughts: first, Schelling, as we have already seen, insists that one who truly wants to know must raise themselves to the level of “the incoercible, the ungraspable, the truly infinite” and “make the indefinable the definition” (Schelling, 1969: 17). This act of raising oneself up to think along with “the flux of inseparable movement” that is eternal freedom is the solicitation of madness, but it also the pursuit of self-

knowledge. Second, the way in which this encounter happens so that the philosopher does not simply drop off into madness is in terms of the dialogical character of Schelling's thinking. One must solicit madness, but one must also maintain a center in oneself. In raising oneself up to the level of eternal flux, one does not give oneself over to it in some collapse into mystical unity, rather one holds oneself in a relationship of *Gelassenheit*, releasement, towards the life of nature, the chaos of nature, that is present in all things, including oneself (Schelling, 2000: 63).

When Schelling demands that thinkers must "raise themselves" to the level of the absolute in order to think it, what he is really demanding is that thinkers raise themselves to the point wherein they can think movement as movement. Yet on all of Schelling's own accounts, this may be an impossible demand. As early as the late 18th century, in his *Ideas Towards a Philosophy of Nature*, Schelling explains that the equilibrium of forces that exist in nature maintain themselves in a "lasting, forever undecided, strife" unless humans are able to inhibit their interplay so that one of the two terms, contraction or expansion, gains a kind of dominance. In that dominance the equilibrium that would have been becomes knowable, but only in its absence. I think that it is legitimate to characterize Schelling's relation to thinking the movement of the absolute subject as eternal freedom in a similar manner, so long as we can hear the account just given continuing to resonate in the following assertion. Schelling says that when eternal freedom, or eternal magic, is "*acting*, enclosing itself in a form, it becomes knowing, it experiences knowing as it goes from form to form, steps from knowing to knowing, but only in order to be able to break through again in the bliss of not-knowing (which is then a knowing not-knowing)" (Schelling, 1969: 25). Schelling is then quick to note that the process of appearing in forms and retreating from forms, which can

only occur insofar as things become sufficiently contracted, sufficiently thickened, so that particular entities—and potentially even the principles that organize those entities—become knowable, generates *the science*, which is not yet human science. He explains: “Science only emerges when a principle steps out from the original state of not-knowing, becomes knowable, and accordingly passes through all forms and returns to the original not-knowing” (Schelling, 1969: 25).

But if this is when and where science emerges have we not merely caught ourselves in a bind? I have argued that principle-centered, conceptual thinking stands in an antipodal relationship to the demands of Schelling’s philosophizing. Yet based upon the account he has just presented us, do we not find ourselves having to think in terms of principles and forms, i.e., in terms of systems, in the plural, in an attempt to make our way back to thinking the eternal past? Schelling is all too aware of this concern. Immediately after the quotations just presented he writes:

What the absolute beginning is, cannot itself be known; passing into knowing it ceases to be the beginning and therefore must advance until it finds itself again as beginning. When this beginning knows itself as beginning, a restored beginning, it is the end of all knowing. (Schelling, 1969: 25)

But now, and no pun is intended, we are right back at the beginning. Schelling’s endeavor, as Bowie described, may be to think the unthinkable as the ground prior to principle-centered thinking. Yet for Schelling, we still have an entry point to thinking the beginning as beginning—though it is an in-road about which I would like to be quite cautious. That in-road is humanity—an in-road (which will hopefully be more than a *Holzweg*) that we will return to in full in the next chapter. Schelling explains:

It appears that for humans there can be *no* knowledge of eternal freedom. Yet we demand such immediate knowledge, it is true. The only possibility of such

knowledge would be if this self-knowledge of eternal freedom were *our consciousness*, and vice versa, if *our consciousness* were to be a *self-knowledge of eternal freedom*. (Schelling, 1969: 33)

Schelling insists that this would then make the appearance of eternal freedom in humanity the reconstructed beginning, the beginning begun anew. We are then left asking: what exactly does this mean? We are certainly, yet again, left with a strange way of thinking freedom. If our consciousness is the self-knowledge, or coming to self-awareness, of the infinite productivity of being would that not mean that all of our knowledge, all of our knowing, is a knowledge—or knowing—of freedom, in the full sense of the double genitive operative at that moment?

For the sake of clarity we must now take a brief leave from discussing the manner of thinking that is necessary to think eternal freedom in Schelling, we shall return to this question as the focal point of our next chapter, wherein we will investigate the consequences that Schelling's thinking of being as freedom (a claim I have not yet made good on) has on the way he thinks about human freedom. Before we can get to that investigation, we need to turn to one of Heidegger's more famous assertions regarding Schelling's *Freiheitschrift*: "*Key assertion*: freedom not the property of the human, rather: human the property of freedom" (Heidegger, 1995: 11). There are a wide variety of ways in which this assertion could, and have, been taken up. Heidegger himself goes on to explain the stakes of the reversal of the subject-predicate structure as an attempt to show that Schelling begins to ask about human freedom as an attempt to move beyond the human to that which is "more essential and powerful than humanity itself: freedom, not as an addition or an endowment of the human will, but rather as the essence of proper being as the essence of the ground for beings as a whole" (Heidegger, 1995: 11). And I hope it has been clear by now that, up to a point, I

agree with Heidegger on this reading of Schelling. What is important, however, is how we understand the assertion that Schelling would make freedom the “essence of the ground for beings as a whole.” After putting this assertion forward, Heidegger shows us what he is really fixing on to at this point: Schelling’s assertion in the *Freiheitschrift* that “In the latest and highest instance there is no other being than willing. Willing is primal being [*Wollen ist Ursein*], and to this alone do all of being’s predicates apply: groundlessness, eternity, independence from time, self-affirmation” (I/7, 351). On Heidegger’s reading this means that, for Schelling, “being is comprehended as willing, as freedom” (Heidegger, 1995: 114).

If Heidegger is right, and we have entered back to a place wherein freedom in Schelling’s thinking is to be thought as willing—which is, I think, indubitably the case—are we not back to a point wherein Schelling’s thinking is based upon “the modern interpretation of beingness as subjectivity” (Heidegger, 1995: 206)? And if this is the case, is not Heidegger correct when he asserts that, “Schelling thinks metaphysically, onto-theologically, but in the highest completion” (Heidegger, 1995: 212)?

Section IV **Will and Onto-Theology: Heidegger’s Critique of Schelling**

Before we can clarify whether or not Schelling is actually able to raise himself up to the level of thinking the absolute—and whether or not the very presentation of such an absolute necessitates a principle-oriented thinking—Heidegger yet again demands our attention. The objective of this section will be to explain the quotations with which the previous section closed. In other words, the task for this section is to explain why Heidegger thinks that Schelling remains a metaphysician and an onto-theologian. To do so, we must return to the *Freedom* essay with a bit more care than has thus far been done. My

objective is to show that while Heidegger, as I previously asserted, is clearly correct in asserting that willing is a limit concept for Schelling, what exactly this willing means in the *Freedom* essay—and even more so, what it means in *Ages of the World* and the *Erlanger Lectures*—may disrupt our common sense (or at least, our philosophical common sense) understanding of how willing functions and what it entails.

For Heidegger, the most important aspect of Schelling's thinking—and that which makes his thinking, at least in part, exorbitant to the long history of metaphysics while still belonging to it—is that, while he is committed to a certain way of thinking ground as *arche* or *hypokeimenon*, the way in which these concepts appear in his writing is peculiar: God is always already bifurcated into God as ground and God as existence. Let us turn to Schelling's text to get an initial sense of what exactly this means, and why exactly it must be so.

Schelling's *Freedom* essay is an extraordinarily complex piece of philosophical writing, made no easier to handle by the fact that, on the surface, it presents itself as a strange instance in the long history of theodicy. As David Farrell Krell explains, on the surface, the essay is an attempt to explain “the philosophical problem of the origin and existence of evil” (Krell, 2005: 71). And for the moment, I will approach this essay in accord with this surface interpretation, as only when we approach the text in this manner can Heidegger's criticisms make sense.

Schelling hopes to offer an explanation of how humans can be free for both good and evil, while at the same time, absolving God, the creator, of any overt responsibility for this evil. Schelling does not want to revert to any of the historical interpretations of evil, such as those presented by Augustine, Plotinus or Leibniz, which would hold evil to be privation. Nor does Schelling want to offer a “merely formal concept of freedom,” such as

that which his Idealist predecessors offer (at least on his account). Rather, he wants to present a “real and living concept [of freedom], which would be a capacity for good and for evil” (I/7, 353). In order to attain both of these objectives—a real and living and concept of freedom and a perfect God—Schelling introduces the following way of thinking God:

There is nothing before or outside of God, so God must have the ground of his existence in himself. All philosophies say this; but they speak of this ground as a mere concept, without making it something real and actual. This ground of his existence, which God has in himself, is not God taken observed absolutely, i.e., insofar as he exists; because it is only the ground of his existence, it is *nature*—in God; a being that is truly inseparable from him, but still distinguished. (I/7, 358)

This ground that is in God, inseparable from God, but still distinguished from God is described as nature. It is also described as, “what in God himself is not *himself*.” Finally, he says (and we shall have to return to this assertion more fully later), “If we want to bring this being nearer to humanity, we could say it would be the longing [*Sehnsucht*] that the eternal one feels to give birth to itself” (I/7, 359). This longing is described as a willing that lacks intellect, it is arational drive, it is—interestingly enough—the “remainder which never surfaces” in creation (I/7, 360).

So, how precisely does introducing this bifurcation in God, which we addressed earlier in relation to *Ages of the World*, solve the ‘problems’ that I pointed to a moment ago? Why would introducing an arational drive, an arational aspect into God gives us both real and actual human freedom and preserve God? The reasons for this are quite simple: God taken as ground is arational, primal willing, unconscious self-desiring. God taken as existence is God as understanding. Yet in order for God to be given back to himself as a unity that knows itself, he must first see himself reflected back to himself in the development of nature out of himself as ground (I/7, 364). For Schelling, God cannot exist in full self-

knowledge in advance, that is, prior to creation, as otherwise God would be responsible for evil in his creations. Thus, to repeat, God must only come to self-consciousness through the becoming of his creation. In putting this account forward, Schelling believes that both God's justice and human freedom can be preserved.

It must be noted that the account given here is radically simplified, yet I think, for the moment at least, it will suffice. As was said, this split in God between God as ground and God as existence is central for Heidegger's reading of Schelling. He famously refers to it as the *Seynsfuge*, "the jointure of being" (Heidegger, 1995: 188). This characterization of being as jointure is still, for Heidegger, a trope of an *arche*, a *subiectum*, a *ground*. It is the reference point, in fact, the basis to which all interpretations of being must be referred. As was said, it is exorbitant to a simplistic variant of principial thinking because the principle is doubled within itself, yet it is still a principle, a basis. Not only is it still a basis—even if a peculiar basis—but for Heidegger it does not even stay all that peculiar. In fact, for Heidegger, given Schelling's emphasis upon willing as primal being, the true duplicity of this jointure is collapsed back into the univocity of the will. The will is both the will of the ground and the will of existence and precedes them both—or put it another way, it is that which is "most in being of all beings" and upon the basis of which all things are measured, encountered, and thought (Heidegger, 1995: 212).

Taking will in this way in Schelling permits Heidegger to arrive at the conclusion that closed the last section of this chapter—Schelling is the pinnacle of onto-theology. Though a bifurcation is introduced, it is introduced only to be sublated in the aspiration for the system of freedom. As for Heidegger, it is with the question of system, and its relation to will, that Schelling both rises and falls. His desire to arrive at a system of freedom—a seemingly

paradoxical task—necessitates that he posits the bifurcation within God. But if this same bifurcation between God as primal, arational longing and God as actualized understanding is taken with its full force it means that God as ground cannot be included or accounted for within the system, at least insofar as that system is a system takes the will as understanding to be its principle. Heidegger writes, “But if the system is only in understanding, then it remains that the ground and the opposition are excluded from the system as the other of the system, and the system is, taken from the perspective of the whole of beings, no longer the system” (Heidegger, 1995: 194). Heidegger refers to this paradoxical necessity of exclusion as the “difficulty on which he shatters [*er scheitert*].” Not only does this difficulty shatter Schelling’s aspirations in the *Freedom* essay, for Heidegger it haunts and shatters all of Schelling’s future philosophical endeavors. It is the reason why Schelling must turn to a concept of the absolute that is able to unify this jointure so as to prevent the collapse of the system, but this of course would mean that the jointure itself would no longer be an original bifurcation—absolute as absolute willing would reign over such a split thus nullifying the jointure of being’s exorbitancy from the long history of metaphysics.

This shattering is the reason why Heidegger sees Schelling as completion of metaphysics, of the first beginning. For Heidegger, Schelling “falls back into the fixed tradition of western thought without transforming it creatively” (Heidegger, 1995: 194). He takes us to the point wherein we can recognize the necessity of the other beginning out of the first. But for Heidegger, this other beginning must take place through a “full transformation of the first beginning, it is never possible by merely letting the first beginning stand” (Heidegger, 1995: 194). Yet here, I am left wondering, alongside Wirth, “Did Schelling really just let the first beginning stand” (Wirth, 2004: 4)? Wirth insists that

Heidegger misreads Schelling in large part due to Heidegger's emphasis upon the systematic character of Schelling's thinking, saying, "by insisting on Schelling's systematicity, on his embrace of oppositional forces that he can never succeed in coordinating into an account of the Whole, Heidegger pushes Schelling closer to Hegel than Schelling would have placed himself" (Wirth, 2004: 4). For Wirth, Schelling's constant insistence upon the self-revelation of God—which really means, the perpetually becoming character of God, a God who can never be complete, a God who is always beginning, and beginning again—takes him outside of the domain of onto-theology. He writes, "Schelling will never be finished, for the beginning can never in any way take possession of itself, while Hegel can complete a thought about the Whole, despite the ongoing life of the negative" (Wirth, 2004: 4). Thus, Heidegger is right: Schelling's thinking really does shatter. However, this shattering must be heard in a very different way if we turn away from an attempt to offer an account of Schelling as a systematic thinker—or at least a thinker who attempts to posit a system that is based on an onto-theological principle. Let us listen to Wirth again, keeping in mind how much like Heidegger this sounds yet how differently it resonates:

Indeed, Schelling often speaks of the *problem* of the system of freedom, of an articulation of the Whole that cannot articulate its ever barbarian and nomadic founding principle. A system of freedom is a system constructed upon a principle that ruins all ideas. The system of freedom cannot assimilate the principle that bore it and that will ruin it, yet such a principle tragically grounds the Whole, disallowing the Whole ever wholly to *be* itself. (Wirth, 2004: 5)

While being careful, so as to give Heidegger his due, what Wirth demands from us in our reading of Schelling becomes clear. How are we to hear Schelling's talk about the will, the absolute, and subjectivity if these terms do not serve as onto-theological grounds of system?

Section V
The Dissembling Subject of Freedom

The task of this final section of this chapter is to offer a way of reading Schelling's usage of the language of will, absolute, subjectivity, and other terms that Heidegger associates with the first beginning, onto-theology, and Western metaphysics in a manner that does not let the first beginning stand. To give Heidegger's critique its due, I will begin with an investigation of Schelling's discussion of the absolute in the *Erlanger Lectures* and then turn to investigate the relationship between subject and predicate in Schelling's thinking of freedom and decision in the *Freedom* essay and in *Ages of the World*.

Recall that for Heidegger, Schelling's shattering in the face of attempting to maintain a coherent account of the jointure of being and of system leads him to posit a concept of the absolute in which these differences are united to the point of sublation, or maybe said better, eradication. For Heidegger, Schelling's positing of the absolute leads him to articulate an original univocity of being. Is this an accurate account of what actually happens in Schelling's text?

In the *Erlanger Lectures*, Schelling perpetually reverts back and forth between the language of the absolute subject and eternal freedom. As Theodore George notes, "In an age marked by a growing awareness of the importance of alterity and difference for philosophical inquiry, the issue of the absolute cannot but give pause" (George, 2005: 137).²⁸ However, if one attends carefully to Schelling's comments about the absolute in his *Erlanger*

²⁸ For George, given that his essay focuses in on Schelling's early writings, his understanding of the absolute is much more similar to the way in which Kant takes up the term: as the absolute unity of subject and world attained through the gathering force of reason. George's purpose here is to show that this unity is a task that is excessive to reason—for the reasons Kant demonstrated in the third antinomy. George's claim is that it is this internal crisis of reason that prompts Schelling's turn to the poetic. While this account seems entirely correct to me, I do not believe that George's account of the absolute in this essay exhausts the way in which the term functions for Schelling.

Lectures, and elsewhere, the concern that George is describing—as an echo of Heidegger’s critique of Schelling—may be eased. For instance, formulations such as “this absolute subject, eternal freedom” and “the absolute subject or eternal freedom” dominate this text (Schelling, 1969: 29). In fact there is not a single instance in this text where Schelling uses the term ‘absolute’ or the phrase ‘absolute subject’ without give us a *sive* and an ‘eternal freedom’ at least within the same paragraph. Yet it is clear within the text of the *Erlanger Lectures* that Schelling has made some dramatic reconfigurations with regards to how he understands the relationship between expansion and contraction from the time of the *Freedom* essay, and even from the time of *Ages of the World*. Neither the terms ground and existence nor the terms expansion and contraction appear in this text, at least not in a manner that is operative as in those two texts. Unlike *Ages of the World* or the *Freedom* essay, Schelling does not begin this text with an account of the internal bifurcation within God. He does begin these lectures with an account of “originary struggle [*Urxwist*]” (Schelling, 1969: 10), but this struggle is that conflict that emerges between “the original *asustasia* of human knowledge” and the absolute subject, or, eternal freedom as that which is to be gathered into a system of human knowing (Schelling, 1969: 15). This whole conflict is described as the matter for thinking. As Wirth explains, “[Schelling] names the prime matter of thinking *asustasia*—incoherence, irregularity, chaos. It is the lack or privation of *ystasis*, of standing and being together” (Wirth, 2003: 210).

Looking back to the beginning of this chapter, this absolute subject is that which eludes all coercion, conceptualization, and stoppage, and as Schelling notes, this absolute subject “should not be confused with God” (Schelling, 1969: 18). Rather, it is that which can be grasped as God and as not God, depending on what form it is enclosed in at any

given moment—and it is at this point that Schelling explains why he understands this *Sache* as eternal freedom. He explains “it is still originally free to either enclose itself or not enclose itself in a form,” at which point he immediately cautions his audience: “But I do not want to say that it is that which is free to take on form. As then, this freedom would appear as a *property*, which presumes a still distinct and independent subject—rather, freedom is the *essence* [*Wesen*] of the subject, or it is itself *nothing other than eternal freedom*” (Schelling, 1969: 21). This eternal freedom is precisely what we earlier characterized as “possibility for the sake of possibility, possibility without intention or object” (Schelling, 1969: 22). I take this later assertion to be particularly important in light of Heidegger’s critique, and we shall return to it shortly, but for now, let us move in within Schelling’s text, so as to enable us to complete the task I set out at the beginning of this section.

At this juncture in the text, a few key terms appear for the first time. Schelling goes on to name this absolute subject *sive* eternal freedom as will, and then again as indifference. He writes, “It is will—not the will of a being [*Wesens*] that is distinct from it—nothing but the will itself. It is also not the will for something (as that would already limit it), but rather *the will in itself*” (Schelling, 1969: 22). It is a will that neither wants nor does not want, it is “the will in complete indifference [*Gleichgültigkeit*] (an indifference which again encompasses itself and non-indifference).” Schelling then goes on to say—potentially so as to recognize his own greatness, but more likely to reference Jakob Böhme—that “you may at least be aware that historically this same indifference was declared as the indifference [*Indifferenz*] as the form of the properly absolute” (Schelling, 1969: 22). Is this the same *Indifferenz* that is made famous in the *Freedom* essay? The same *Indifferenz* that Schelling also names as *Ungrund* when he writes, “It must be a being [*Wesen*] *before* all ground and before all existence, and

thus before all duality whatsoever; what else could we name this than primal ground [Urgrund], or better yet, nonground [Ungrund]" (I/7, 407)?

Krell clearly articulates the entirety of our problematic in tarrying with Heidegger's reading of Schelling with regards to precisely this issue of nonground. As he explains, the bifurcation of ground and existence runs the risk of collapsing into a dualism. To avoid this, "Science must therefore strive to find that *Mittelpunkt*" at which ground and existence interpenetrate with one another. *This is precisely the urge and necessity that Heidegger points to in Schelling so as to indict him for his onto-theological bearing.* If Schelling were in fact an onto-theologian what else could we call this but an *Ur-ground*—the ultimate basis of reality in things, that principle to which all must be referred for their meaning and fixity? Yet Schelling, even in the *Freedom* essay does not let this stand. Krell writes:

In Schelling's text ("...*wie können wir es anders nennen als den Urgrund oder vielmehr Ungrund?*"), the primal, primordial, incipient, originary ground and the nonground are brought into the closest proximity: only a single letter distinguishes them, not even an entire letter, inasmuch as here it is merely a matter of expanding a single stroke of one letter, extending the arc of the *r* in *Urgrund* to the *n* of *Ungrund*. The one downward stroke of the pen, performed at the stroke of one, alters origins to nihilations. (Krell, 2005: 94)

While I am forced to hold off on commenting on Krell's description of the nonground or unground as nihilation, I think it is worth noting that this simple move in Schelling takes us from granting the existence of a supreme, primal, super ground in Schelling, to having to wonder what exactly we would have to do to make sense of speaking of such an absolute *sive* subject *sive* will *sive* indifference *sive* freedom as an origin? I, for one, cannot encounter Schelling's description of eternal freedom as fitting within his account of the way ground functions in onto-theology; it neither rigidly instantiates a distinction between the sensible

and the intelligible, nor does it serve exhibit the thought of a thinker who gloms onto presence and upsurge in lieu of concealment and withdrawal.

If one were to look back to the earlier “*Key sentence*: Freedom not the property of the human, rather, the human the property of freedom” (Heidegger, 1995: 11) as cited from Heidegger, we could see one reason why he would be inclined to read freedom as a ground that maintains its internal coherency and constant presence. Yet, as we saw a moment ago, for the Schelling of the *Erlanger Lectures*, this freedom is pure possibility, possibility without intention. What sense would make it to refer to possibility having a property as if it were a subject of which we could predicate? Wirth explains that to say the human is a predicate of freedom “assumes that freedom itself is a subject but ... while freedom first appears in the subject position, it is a false subject, a dissembling and ironic subject” (Wirth, 2004: 6).

Schelling himself will come back to explain this nearly twenty years later in a lecture in Munich, writing:

This unknown what, this X of the unprethinkable being is clearly *antecedenter* or *a priori* in relation to any existent [*das Seyende*]. But this does not prevent that precisely this, which is *a priori* to any existent, and can be taken *post actum* (as it is appropriate to say here) as being possible [*Seinskönnende*]. We now say that it does not prevent, we say not yet: it is actually so – this can first be shown *a posteriori*, through its consequences; *a priori* it is only the possibility to be realized [*a priori ist nur die Möglichkeit einzusehen*], it is precisely that which always precedes, and can be taken as being possible. (II/4, 338)

What is particularly exciting about this passage is not just Schelling’s articulation of the perpetual priority of being as *unvordenkliche*, but also his insistence—which is persistent throughout this lecture—that this *Seynskönnende* is prior to any existent, or as Wirth would have it in his translation of *Ages of the World*, anything that has being (Schelling, 2000: xxxi). This would far remove us from being able to take this eternal freedom—regardless of

whether we hear it as will, absolute subject, eternal magic, or any of the numerous names Schelling uses to describe the ungraspable—as basis to which things could be referred, at least not a basis that is constant and has any standing on its own.

Much earlier in his philosophical career Schelling makes an even more provocative assertion regarding the constitution of the absolute; an assertion that will take us full circle, back to the beginning of this chapter. In his *Philosophy of Art*, Schelling writes, “the inner essence of the absolute, wherein all lies as one and one as all, is original chaos itself; but even here we encounter the identity of absolute form with absolute formlessness” (I/5, 465). In pointing to this quote, I would like to hear it as explained by Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback, “It is important to note that Schelling doesn’t say “chaos” but “the original chaos,” hereby distinguishing between a simple chaos and an original chaos. By the latter Schelling means the chaos that is beyond or indifferent to the difference between chaos and order.” This ur-chaos, in relation to which human reason experiences the *Urzustand*, is “the inconceivably placeless force of an eternal beginning,” or is I would have it, it is being as freedom (Schuback, 2005: 75). But how are we to think this freedom? If my exposition of Schelling thus far has not been sufficient, Martin Wallen can help:

A history in which the past continues along with the present undermines the single narrative development from beginning to middle to end told by a transcendent, subjective narrator, reminding us that within the cosmic orgasm an infinite possibility obtains. (Wallen, 2005: 128)

To say infinite possibility obtains, is to say that if anything reigns (in the manner in which epochal principles reign throughout the history of metaphysics for Heidegger) in Schelling’s work it is freedom; freedom thought as the pure possibility of being, the perpetually underdetermined character of coming to presence. This can be made all the more clear

when we consider another manner in which Schelling's phrase, "*nie aufgehende Rest*," can be translated. I have translated this phrase—in accord with Heidegger's discussion of *physis*—as the remainder that never surfaces. Krell offers a variant translation: "the remnant that is never wholly absorbed" (Krell, 2005: 90). While I have been suggesting that the former reading was more salient insofar as my work in this chapter has been to show Schelling's attentiveness to the perpetual withdrawal of being in light of Heidegger's critique, Krell's translation permits us to think through this *Sache* in another manner, one which is more instructive for our thinking of freedom.

Since the beginning of this chapter I have been emphasizing the productive character—the infinitely productive character—of, or better as, being for Schelling. If we hear Schelling's discussion of this *Rest*, as a phenomenon that both never surfaces and precisely as such can never be absorbed, we will see that what is *really* at stake here is excess or overflow. This constant beginning, just like Bataille's general economy as described by Wirth in the quotation that opens this chapter, thwarts any attempt to capture it in the net of reason not merely because it withdraws, but because it is *just too much*. On the surface, this would seem to fly in the face of Heidegger's perpetual insistence on *Ereignis* as withdrawal and thus open up a new tension between Schelling and Heidegger. While I think this tension could be explored, I would merely like to point out an instance from late in Heidegger's career wherein he offers a rethinking of *Ereignis* in precisely these terms, that is, as *Übermäß* or *Überfülle*, excess or overflow. In the *Four Seminars*, specifically in his *Seminar in Le Thor 1969*, Heidegger writes, "What is named together and at the same time in the word *phuein*? It is the overflow, the excess of what presences." This overflow, this excess, is said to "correspond" with "the *a* of *aletheia*." Heidegger continues, "Privation is not negation.

The more strongly the *a* of *aletheia* becomes what is indicated by the word *phuein*, the more powerful the source from which it arises becomes, the concealment in unconcealment” (GA15, 331).²⁹ While it is only a provisional interpretation of this passage, I suggest that what Heidegger is announcing here is that the structure of presencing as the oft-mentioned play of revealing and concealing amounts to the simultaneous play of withdrawal and excess of the generosity of being—which he re-characterizes here as *Anwesen lassen*, or, to let presencing; in fact I will venture to say that the withdrawal of *Ereignis* for thought is precisely *due* to the excessiveness, the overflow, the overfulness (to coin a Nietzschean word) that is presencing.

And it is here that I come to my conclusion for this chapter: my contention is that much like Heidegger will equate being with the perpetually underdetermined character of presencing in his later writings—potentially underdetermined precisely due to the excess proper to presencing—, Schelling here is equating this *unvordenkliche* being, taken as freedom or pure possibility, with the very nature of nature in its perpetual overflow. As Wirth writes, having glommed on to the description of being as *asystasia*, “asystasia is not therefore something, a discernible source out of which philosophical activity properly emerges. It is, rather, the absolute nothing. It is not an empty space or lack. It is superabundance” (Wirth, 2004: 211). But as Wirth is quick to point out, this superabundance, as Schelling says, “is nothing—not something, this itself would at least only be a negative definition, it is also not nothing, that is, it is everything” (Schelling, 1969: 17).

Schelling is clearly giving us an account of origins here, but it is an origin that is perpetually manifesting itself, and thus perpetually concealing itself—or better, dissembling

²⁹ I am grateful to Andrew Mitchell for pointing this passage out to me.

itself—as an always already completed origin from which things spring always already determined. It is the “*ewige Anfang*, the eternally still to be born, the *Unvordenklichkeit* or unprethinkability inherent in the donation of the ceaselessly discontinuous gift of nature” (Wirth, 2004: 17). It is Hesiod’s Chaos—which I have argued, following Wirth, Schelling names as *asystasia*, nature, unprethinkable being—from which Night is born, it is an emergence without an agent. Yet if this is so, why does Schelling use the language that he does, the language of metaphysics of subjectivity? Let us recall a passage cited earlier; the passage wherein Schelling discusses the longing of God to give birth to himself in the *Freedom* essay. This longing is what Heidegger characterizes as the will of the ground over and against the will of the understanding. Schelling says, “If we want to bring this being nearer to humanity, we could say it would be the longing [*Sehnsucht*] that the eternal one feels to give birth to itself” (I/7, 359). I present this passage again to highlight an element of it that has thus far gone unexplored: Schelling’s initial caveat. In German, he writes, “*Wollen wir uns dieses Wesen menschlich näher bringen,*” and then goes on to articulate this account of ground as longing. This passage could also be translated to read, “If we wish to speak of this being in terms more accessible to man.”³⁰ Both Hayden-Roy’s translation and my own show that Schelling is clearly aware of the anthropomorphic character of this account of ground and willing. He clearly thinks that this way of accounting for God *qua* jointure of being has its merits insofar as it makes the phenomena in question more accessible to human cognition, or more like the way in which human life unfolds. And at a certain point, I am left wondering whether or not he should truly be nailed to the cross of onto-theology for making such a linguistic decision—as after all, if we do not understand things in “human

³⁰ This is Priscilla Hayden-Roy’s translation, as found in *Philosophy of German Idealism* (Behler, 1987: 238).

terms,” how else are you and I to grasp them? If I have made a compelling case that Schelling’s thinking of being as freedom, or pure possibility, disassembles any constant origin, Heidegger’s critique may appear to be nothing more than a linguistic quibble. Yet before I can truly vindicate such a bold assertion, I must turn back to promises made earlier in this chapter, particularly the apparent thesis of this chapter that has thus far gone unexplained: freedom is both the matter and manner of thinking for Schelling.

Having noted the absence of a full-fledged inquiry into this assertion, the stakes of the next chapter should now be clear. I will turn back to numerous assertions within Schelling’s *Freedom* essay, the *Ages of the World*, the *Erlanger Lectures*, and elsewhere to make a case that Schelling’s seemingly strange assertion that human freedom is eternal freedom reconstructed is not that peculiar at all, and can really only be understood insofar as we appreciate the perpetually dialogic and ecstatic character of the manner of Schelling’s thinking. Here I will argue that Schelling’s thinking of philosophizing is much closer to Heidegger’s following characterization of philosophy:

It is always to be emphasized that philosophy arises in the dimension of the wholly excessive. In fact philosophy is the answer of a human essence that is met by an excess of presence, — an answer that is in itself excessive. (GA15, 331)

In the end I want to make the provocative assertion that for Schelling philosophizing is the activity of dialogue itself, a dialogue that both entails and necessitates the perpetually ecstatic character of humanity, and a dialogue in which we both think and experience freedom.

Schelling himself makes this clear when he writes, “To think is to abandon knowledge; knowledge is bound, thinking is in complete freedom, and the word [*denken*] itself implies that all free thinking is the result of a separation, a conflict, or a crisis, that has been overcome [*aufgehoben*en]” (Schelling, 1969: 52). Schelling characterizes such thinking, or

knowing—not knowledge, as if it were completed—as a “free and restful observer that accompanies and witnesses the movement [of eternal freedom] step by step” (Schelling, 1969: 55). The objective of the next chapter will be to clarify these assertions and to show how they relate to place of the human in nature, Schelling’s understanding of conceptual thinking.

CHAPTER V

DECISION, THINKING, AND FREEDOM

Given the work that was accomplished in the previous chapter, the task for this chapter is to explain what it would mean to say: for Schelling, freedom is the manner of thinking, particularly in light of his manifold discussions of human freedom. While I have already spent a substantial amount of time laying the stakes of thinking for Schelling, the account given is not yet sufficient to clarify what Schelling is up to with his thinking of human freedom, in light of his thinking of being as freedom, his account of philosophizing, and his account of the primordial act of decision as detailed in *Ages of the World* (and alluded to in the middle of the previous chapter). This chapter will thereby be divided into five sections—wherein the first two address the question of decision, the third and fourth sections address the question of thinking and freedom, and the final section serves as our jump-off point for the final chapter—in an attempt to give an account of these matters of thinking that reign so supreme in Schelling’s writing from his middle period.

My objective in exploring these phenomena is to strengthen the reading of Schelling I offered in the previous chapter. First, I suggest that, following Nietzsche’s famous indictment of grammarians, not all acts, even an act such as decision, require a subject to perform them. Here again, I show how far Schelling’s account of the originary decision of existence is from onto-theology, and thereby from the first beginning of philosophy. Yet in doing so I raise certain problems for myself: would not such an act of primordial decision

necessitate a point of origin, even if not an agent *qua hypokeimenon*? In the second half of the chapter, I will show that while this may be the case, it by no means disturbs the account I have given thus far for a number of reasons, the most important reason being Schelling's caveat about bringing things nearer to humanity in terms of their comprehensibility in the *Freedom* essay. In accounting for freedom as decision, as opposed to choice—as Felix Duque says, “Decision is always originary: it is the origin (in German: *Ursprung*, the “spring that gives origin”). Choice is always derived, and in ground, not wholly free (one chooses on the basis of reasons, one *de-cides* so that reasons come to be)” (Duque, 2007: 74)—Schelling makes being as eternal freedom something thinkable to humans, given that human beings reconstruct this process of decision as ground-laying act, while at the same time enabling us to think beyond the bounds of this decision as one which belongs to a subject, and simultaneously gives us a way to think about our own freedom; a freedom that we attain only in our confrontation with the unprethinkability of decision.

By thinking beyond the bounds of the subject, we are brought into dialogue with the unfolding of existence, an unfolding that is groundless, and which we ourselves are able to reconstruct insofar as we recognize the nonconceptual basis of the concept, i.e., the limit of thought. At this moment, in which what Schelling calls “free thinking” (Schelling, 1969: 52) is realized, we are brought to the point wherein freedom becomes both the manner and matter of thinking; I argue that this moment is the objective of all of Schelling's philosophizing, as is made clear by his insistence upon the primacy of ecstasy, self-emptying, Socratic ignorance, and *Gelassenheit*.

Section I
The Rotary Motion of the Drives

Just as Nietzsche served as our guide in tarrying with the subject of phenomenology in our reading of Heidegger, I take him as a guide yet again. This time, I would like to look at one of his more provocative assertions, it is an assertion that will have consequences that will reverberate both to work that has preceded this chapter and what will follow. In an extended criticism of the function of reason in philosophy, and its relation to Being—this time taken as a static entity, in the highest onto-theological sense—Nietzsche writes:

We arrive amidst a gross fetish if we bring ourselves to consciousness of the fundamental presuppositions of the metaphysics of language, or as we say in German, of reason. This sees doer and deed everywhere: believes in will as cause in general, believes in “I”, in I as being, in I as substance and projects the belief in the I-substance upon all things—it thereby first makes the concept “thing” ... Being is everywhere understood, foisted on, as cause: only from the conception “I” does the concept “being” first follow, as derivative. At the beginning stands the great fate of the error that the will is something, something that works—that will is a faculty... Today we know that it is merely a word... Very much later, in a world that is a thousand times more enlightened, the security, the subjective certainty that the categories of reason were in hand, came to the philosopher’s consciousness with a shock. They concluded that these categories could not be derived from the empirical. From whence, then, do they derive? – And in India as in Greece the same mistake has been made: “we must have already, at one time, been at home in a higher world (-instead of in a very much lower one, which would be the truth!), we must have been divine, because we have reason!” ... In fact, up to this point, nothing has had a more naïve persuasive force than the error of being, as it was, for example, formulated by the Eleatics: it speaks for itself in every word we say, and every sentence we utter! – Even the opponents of the Eleatics fell under the trance of their concepts of being: Democritus, amongst others, as he invented his atom... Reason in language: oh what a deceitful old woman! I fear, we are not getting rid of God, because we still believe in grammar. (KGA, VII/III: 71)

In quite typical fashion, Nietzsche takes out his hammer—doubling as his tuning fork—and tunelessly nails the history of philosophy to the wall. Yet bombast aside, what are the stakes of Nietzsche’s assertion? Put simply, Nietzsche believes there is a *fundamental* connection between the way we speak—particularly the structure of language: grammar—and our

attachment and commitment to the deed/doer relationship. In other words, Nietzsche believes that the way we speak, always attributing an agent to any action—and one need only think of the abuse a writer suffers who relies upon the passive voice, rather than upon a ‘one,’ such as the one that began this caveat—exists in a reciprocally reinforcing relationship with our conception of the I as constant, unchanging, permanent, even immortal, agent. Not only does our manner of speaking always speak in favor of ourselves as agents, but it also always speaks in favor of the concept of being as constant presence, i.e., as ground. One need only think of the emphatic theist who refuses to hear out any account of the origins of the universe that does not begin with an intelligence by constantly demanding to know “where did that [be it the original compressed point of matter of the big bang, or whatever you like] come from?” to understand what Nietzsche has in mind. Neither German nor English give their speakers much of an opportunity to learn to think of deeds without doers. It is thereby only logical that someone would struggle to think the thought that Nietzsche recommends in *Beyond Good and Evil*: thinking happens, and sometimes I find myself at the site of its occurrence, having to deal with it. If that thought proves as difficult to think for most as it does for me, I can only imagine how hard of a thought ‘being happens’—or, ‘*das Sein geschieht*’—truly is; much less, the thought ‘happening happens’—or, “*das Geschebende geschieht*.” Yet it has been precisely this thought that I have been suggesting we must make the matter for thinking if we are to think freedom in both Heidegger and Schelling. On the one hand, Schelling is clearly guilty of accounting for the emergence and capacities of humanity as flowing out of a ‘higher’ world to which we belong, but this is merely a surface reading of his text. Can we speak of a God who is internally ruptured as ‘higher’?

Keeping Nietzsche in mind, let us turn to a moment in Schelling's text that occupied a portion of the previous chapter, but which was left largely unexplained and unexplored: decision. As I have already asserted, in thinking decision, we must be careful not to conflate it with choice. As Duque pointed out for us, decision is always blind insofar as it has no means by which it could decide for what the best path to take would be. Choice, on the other hand, is always a choice between already existing options. Given that such options, whether they are different manners in which I would like conceive of my identity, or different brands of shoes that I could buy, always hinge on the priority of the existence of a world, decision can be put into relief as an act by which a world is constituted. And in Schelling, the stakes of decision are raised. The primordial decision, or deed, as we encounter it in Schelling's text, does not just set up a world in Heidegger's sense of the term, but rather sets up *the* world; this deed is the basis, the ground of all creation. It is the act by which the oft-discussed 'primordial deadlock of the drives,' the conflict between the expansive force, the A^2 , and the contractive force, the A^1 , is broken. Schelling writes, "precisely *that* one commences and one of them is first, must result from a decision that certainly has not been made consciously, or through deliberation but can happen rather only when a violent power blindly breaks the unity in the jostling between the necessity and the impossibility to be" (Schelling, 2000: 13). It is this blind breaking of the deadlock to which we must hold fast in attempting to answer the question: what is a decision without a decider?

While it is inevitable that this account presents itself as being somewhat contradictory to much of the account of Schelling's thinking of being that I have given in the last chapter, I believe that, in time, their consonance—even if ever so slightly out of tune—will become clear. For starters, there is an initial similitude between the account that

Schelling is giving at the beginning of the *Ages of the World* and what we have seen from the *Erlanger Lectures* insofar as the account of the latter is in large part concerned to describe being as fundamentally being possible. I think that this determination as always yet un-and-underdetermined possibility can be seen in the *Ages of the World*—and Schelling himself gives us reasons to think this is the case in a number of places throughout this text—as describing precisely the chaos out of which the primordial act of decision breaks. Yet articulating this similitude is not my objective here, rather, my task now is to explain how—and maybe even more importantly, why—Schelling’s description of the rupture of this chaos, and its subsequent snaring in the net of reason can account for the origins of all creation, or better, of all beings.

Prior to turning to a more robust account of how decision functions in Schelling’s text, we must look at what exactly is ruptured by this decision: the rotary motion of the drives, the principles, or the potencies within God. Schelling’s description of the competition for priority between the expansive and contractive force in God (recall, as was said in the previous chapter, that both of these terms exist from eternity in God) amounts to an attempt to describe God’s self-revelation from out of the perpetual cycle of one drive, either the expansive or the contractive, taking dominance. Picking up this cycle at what appears to the beginning—though it may only be the beginning for the mind that is still committed to thinking origin, Schelling is quite clear that the contractive force must take first priority. Schelling gives a number of reasons for this, but the most basic reason is actually quite simple: “it is manifest ... that actual power lies more in delimitation than expansion and ... to withdraw oneself has more to do with might than to give oneself” (Schelling, 2000: 14). And thus, “That God negates itself, restricts its being, and withdraws

into itself, is the eternal force and might of God. In this manner, the negating force is that which is singularly revealing of God” (Schelling, 2000: 15). He goes on to give a litany of examples to describe why this must be the case, let me attempt to offer a recap of all of these accounts. In order for any process to begin, whether that process be the growth of a tree or the creation of a number line, one must have the potential for counting or the potential for growth first condensed into one initial point—a point which may appear as non-being in relationship to the being that would be the tree or the series of real numbers, whether that be the seed, the root, or the number one—that serves as the basis for what is to grow from it. Bowie describes the image of the number line quite well: “the beginning of a line is not yet a line, it has no extension, but a point is not nothing at all, in that lines cannot be lines without points. It is this sort of beginning that is at issue here: it cannot be structurally located, but can only be understood through what it has ceased to be” (Bowie, 1993: 99). In this cosmic scheme of things, this point of condensation is what Schelling will call, in the *Freedom* essay, God’s ground or, “*nature—in God*” (I/7, 358).

This ground, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is what Schelling characterizes as God’s *Sehnsucht*, its longing to give birth to itself. In the *Ages of the World*, Schelling characterizes this ground, the A^1 , in terms of self-desire yet again. He explains:

Each being primarily wants itself and this self-wanting is later precisely the basis of egoity, that through which a being withdraws itself or cuts itself off from other things and that through which it is exclusively itself, and therefore is, form the outside and in relation to everything else, negating. (Schelling, 2000: 16)

This immediate contraction as self-desire is thus a no-saying to any form other than pure possibility, it is a rejection of expansion that ironically serves as the basis from which all expansion can take place. Presenting an analogy for the play of expansion and contraction in

Ages of the World lifted from Wolfram Högbe's *Prädikation und Genesis* (Högbe, 2000: 100), Zizek writes, "just before the start, the runner has to 'contract'-concentrate himself, to 'immobilize' himself, to turn himself into a statue, so that he can then, at the sound of the pistol, spring up and run as fast as possible" (Zizek, 1996: 25). Schelling sees this explosion of the kinetic energy of the runner after her contraction into potentiality at the starting block as a necessity. However, it would be a mistake to see it as a dialectical necessity, at least in the way in which this term may usually be employed. Yet again recalling that both of these forces have always existed in God, the competition for priority amounts to a competition of negation. The contractive force, as represented by the runner at the blocks is pure potentiality, is a potentiality that maintains itself as what it is precisely by being "the pure power of assuming any and every other possible form besides what it immediately is" (Thus in a sense, the example of the runner at the blocks does not really make all that much sense, as that image is far too determinate to stand in for the A^1 , presumably this moment can only be thought negatively). The expansive force, as the opposed yes-saying, is the runner who bursts into her sprint, at which point she is sprinting, she is actualized. As Beach has it, the A^2 as "solid determinacy remains just what it is, without the ability to be anything else" (Beach, 1994: 125). Thus the contractive force, as pure negation of determinacy, and the expansive force, as that which actually has being—pure determinacy—can only reign insofar as they negate each other. Beach explains "neither can coexist simultaneously with the other in its pure condition, for the reason that their essential natures are inherently incompatible" (Beach, 1994: 124).

I said a moment ago that it was a mistake to see night and day relating to one another as dialectical opposites; speaking to that matter, Schelling writes, "the day lies

concealed in the night, albeit overwhelmed by the night; likewise the night in the day, albeit kept down by the day, although it can establish itself as soon as the repressive potency disappears” (Schelling, 2000: 18). For Schelling, this interplay of day and night is a relationship of negation, however it is an instance of negation that is not based upon two fully constituted, self-standing, opposites. Rather, much like the relationship between night and day in Heraclitus—rather than in Hesiod, who I cited in the last chapter—night and day for Schelling, belong to one another. Heidegger explains that for Heraclitus (and I would argue for Schelling as well) “night *is* day as the going-under of day. To let day and night belong to one another lies being as much as *logos*. This is precisely what Hesiod could not understand so as to distinguish it from night and day only in their alternations, as he had seen them, as he says in the *Theogony*: ‘The house never holds both at the same time.’” For Heraclitus it is the exact opposite, “the house of being is that of day-night taken together.” Heidegger translates Heraclitus to say, “Hesiod, the teacher of the multitudes, him they hold as a man of deepest wisdom, he who was not familiar when it comes to day and night: in truth it is one” (GA15, 276). This oneness of day and night, in truth—which I read here as in unconcealment, insofar as all unconcealment holds within it concealment—for Heidegger means that these terms are not thinkable in isolation from one another—but not because we can only think one term in conjunction with its opposite. Rather, because this very act of opposition hinges on the more originary belonging-together of this opposition in a state of contraries, which contain each other, even if only their not-yet character.

Thus for Schelling, the relationship between day and night—which he uses here as an analog for expansion and contraction, respectively—is not a dialectical relationship as neither term is sufficiently constituted on its own so as to be able to oppose the other.

Taken in their belonging-together, the potencies are then named the A^3 , which is Schelling's manner of naming indifference in the potencies. I would argue that this is what Warnek is naming when he discusses Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin, wherein *Innigkeit* is 'translated' by Heidegger as *das Zusammengehören des Fremden*, the belonging together of the strange. As Warnek writes, "the task of translating *Innigkeit* thus demands the translation of the movement of translation itself, the thought of the *difference* that joins all things together" (Warnek, 2006: 65). Accordingly, Schelling says, "this third must in itself be outside and above all antithesis, the purest potency, indifferent toward both, free from both, and the most essential" (Schelling, 2000: 19). Warnek's account of *Innigkeit* will accord with Schelling's understanding of the A^3 so long as we are willing to re-write Warnek's difference, as indifference, a point to which we will return in a moment. The real difficulty in Schelling's account emerges when we recognize that "each of the three has an equal right to be that which has being" (Schelling, 2000: 19). This moment leads to the greatest quandary of Schelling's *Ages of the World*, and the key question to be addressed in the next section of this chapter: how does this deadlock ever get broken?

Section II **Differentiating the Indifferent: Decision**

From a logical perspective, the movement of Schelling's text at this juncture would be radically unsatisfactory. The three potencies will continue to swirl around another in their rotary motion so long as they all compete to be what is essential in this triad. The only way for this deadlock to be broken is for something to come on the scene that asserts itself as having being; something higher, in the face of which, the potencies "debase themselves into simple being" (Schelling, 2000: 22). What is this other? Because it cannot be one of the

potencies, it cannot be any way of being that would compete to be what is essential. It can have no determinate character that would assert itself, not even the negative (in)determinacy of the A¹, it can only be pure possibility, “the eternal freedom to be” (Schelling, 2000: 23).³¹ This eternal freedom to be that reigns over the rotary motion of the potencies is no thing; though Schelling names it as the *Gottheit*, which Wirth translates as the Godhead—but would more commonly be translated as divinity. I read this moment in Schelling’s text to be one of the many ways in which he names what Hölderlin calls the holy. Given our discussion of the holy as chaos, Schelling’s description of the Godhead would seem to accord. He writes:

It is not divine nature or substance, but the devouring ferocity of purity that a person is able to approach only with an equal purity. Since all Being goes up in it as if in flames, it is necessarily unapproachable to anyone still embroiled in Being. (Schelling, 2000: 25)

My reading of *Gottheit* as the holy, i.e. as chaos and indifference beyond the indifference of the third potency³², is affirmed (insofar as my presentation in the previous chapter is compelling) by Schelling’s account of “mystics of earlier times” in his *Erlanger Lectures* who “dared to speak of a superdivinity [*Übergottheit*]” (Schelling, 1969: 18). For Schelling, this name, the *Übergottheit*, is another way of naming the absolute, our dissembling subject of

³¹ At this juncture in the text, Schelling spends a great deal of time recounting how this eternal freedom to be is precisely the non-intentional will, as it was discussed in the last chapter. What is peculiar about this moment in Schelling’s text is his quick slippage from saying that this eternal freedom “is like the will that wills nothing” (Schelling, 2000: 24) to equating it with the will (“it is eternal freedom, the pure will” (Schelling, 2000: 25)) in a one page transition. This slippage from expressing a similarity to expressing an identity is troubling at best, but it is a concern that I believe will be quelled by the next section of this chapter.

³² Drew Hyland makes this connection between chaos and indifference—or on Warnek’s reading, *Innigkeit*—in his reading of chaos in Hesiod as gap, or between. Hyland argues against the presentation just given by Heidegger, wanting to argue that Hesiod and Heraclitus are akin to one another in their thinking of the primacy of difference. Given Hesiod’s phrasing, “First of all Chaos came to be,” Hyland argues that “Hesiod seems to tell us . . . that every apparent pair of opposites can only *be* opposites in terms of and thanks to the “between” that allows them to be distinguishable.” Hyland further argues that “the between is not of the same order” as what it would separate, i.e., oppositional pairs. And finally, he argues that, “the between is *prior* to the binaries that it establishes.” And what other name does Hyland give to chaos as this gap? Difference (Hyland, 2006: 15-16).

freedom—and he employs this exact same name, referring, presumably, to these exact same mystics in *Ages of the World* (Schelling, 2000: 25). And how should we go about thinking this? If it is truly beyond being, how can it be thought? As we shall see, for human thinking to raise itself up to the level of the absolute requires, ironically, that we debase ourselves before it.

But what of the rupture of this indifferent, absolute, superdivine, chaos? How does it come about? For Schelling, the rupture takes place as a cision, a *Scheidung*, that emerges within the “actual, living God” as the “unity of necessity and freedom” (Schelling, 2000: 27). This unity of necessity and freedom is Schelling’s way of describing what happens when eternal freedom comes into relation with the rotary motion of the three potencies. In the competition to be the principle that has being, eternal freedom enters as an other, that given its status as *Seinskönnen*, always takes the position of the essential in any relationship.

Schelling then explains that this encounter between the three potencies and eternal freedom:

...magically, so to speak, rouses in that life [the rotary motion] the yearning for freedom. This obsession [*Sucht*] abates into yearning [*Sehnsucht*], wild desire turns into a yearning to ally itself, as if it were its own true or highest self, with the will that wills nothing, with eternal freedom. (Schelling, 2000: 28)

Schelling now describes this relationship of yearning, which is made possible by the belonging-together of contraction and expansion. He explains that in this confrontation, this relationship of desire, a cision takes place—a cut, a separation—insofar as in the face of what is highest and most desired, the low must debase itself in order to desire freedom, as desire can only properly exist when lack is recognized. As Bowie says, “the lack opens up the possibility for striving to get beyond it, ultimately to the unity which would overcome it” (Bowie, 1993: 100). At this moment the contractive principle separates itself as the ground,

the dark ground of God, as the soil in which all things can germinate while remaining hidden. The second potency is then the force of life, which is only able to express itself in this ground. This relationship of life and ground is only able to happen insofar as the rupture of the drives competition for primacy has taken place. As Robert F. Brown has it, “The lower principle serves as the medium in which soul [or: life] can express itself” (Brown, 1977: 199). Thus in the end, we return to where Schelling began: the contractive force takes primacy, as only in negation, or self-emptying, can desire fully emerge. This desire is then brought to life, as it were, by expansion, and it binds itself to freedom via the third potency, the indifference of the first two.

As Brown explains, “eternal freedom initiated the subordination of eternal nature to it” merely by coming onto the scene such that the rotary motion of the potencies could encounter something higher, but “that relationship is maintained by eternal nature’s voluntary submission” (Brown, 1977: 222). Is this, to steal a phrase from Wirth, just more wacky romantic metaphysics? How could we ever know that this decision happened? How could we ever know that any of this account of the swirling of the potencies happened? Schelling’s answer, as Bowie explains, is quite simple: “it is only the fact of the manifest world that is our evidence of the decision” (Bowie, 1993: 107). Schelling himself says that “we must assume [the decision] as having *happened* since all eternity” (Schelling, 2000: 17). The reasons for this assumption are most readily understood so long as we remember that Schelling is, at base, a transcendental philosopher; all things being equal he continues to search for the conditions of the possibility of what he sees in front of him. He also seeks—as was discussed in the fourth section of the previous chapter—to give an account of these conditions that is amenable to the world he *wants* to see in front of him, i.e., the world

in which human freedom is preserved. Looking to the first draft, the 1811 draft, of the *Ages of the World*, Schelling gives us clear insight into how he understands his transcendental project. As a criticism of a mechanistic conception of causality that holds that the world is nothing but “an endless chain of causes and effects that runs backwards and forwards,” (WA I, 10) Schelling explains that if one were to hold this position and try to give an actual account of a ground, a basis, you would by necessity fall into contradiction, in fact the very contradiction that Kant describes in his third antinomy (Kant, 1998: A451/B479). Whether or not Schelling is able to escape from Kant’s third antinomy, on this point, is a question for an entirely different project. Nevertheless, let us turn to the explanation that he gives in his attempt to step outside of his Kant-inspired indictment of mechanistic causality. He agrees that the basis of all knowledge ought to be sought in the past, but asks (and answers):

But if the basis of all knowledge, science, or derivation comes from out of the past, where is there respite? For even having arrived at the last visible presupposition, spirit finds another presupposition that is not grounded through itself; a presupposition that guides spirit to a time where nothing was, as the one impenetrable being contains all things, devoured into itself, out of the depths of which all things were brought forth. (WA I, 13)

As Bowie points out, “the key issue ... is the understanding of ‘nothing’” (Bowie, 1993: 102); the understanding of which I have spent the last two chapters building up. This nothing is, for Schelling, the dark night of the past in which the potencies compete with one another up until they are put in their proper place by their confrontation with eternal freedom, the cision in which contraction is lack can be recognized as such, so as to give birth to the desire for fullness, which in turn can generate the striving for being.

Yet it is crucial that this striving for being is not, by necessity, actualized. Schelling explains that, “the Godhead is the highest freedom precisely because it is both [Yes and No],

in an equally essential fashion. All of this had to be so that thereby a necessary ground of the world would never be found” (Schelling, 2000: 74). Via this assertion Schelling (at least thinks he) circumvents the problem of the third antinomy by pointing out that a causal chain must have its basis in something that is itself uncaused and *contingently necessary*. By this latter phrase, I intend that for Schelling, given that being is, the decision by which the Godhead confined itself and became actual must have happened—however it need not have happened. The decision was free. As Žižek explains, in a typical grandiose assertion, “Schelling’s entire philosophical revolution is contained, condensed, in the assertion that this act which precedes and grounds every necessity is itself *radically contingent*—for that very reason it cannot be deduced, inferred, but only retroactively presupposed” (Žižek, 1996: 45). Schelling affirms this reading in his famed *Münich Lectures* when he describes the first entity, the first moment of actualization. He writes, “The first being [*Seyende*], what I have called the *primum Existens*, is likewise the first contingency (the *ur-contingency*). This whole construction thus begins with the first contingency—unlike itself—, it begins with *dissonance*, and *must* begin as such” (I/10, 101).

What is even more important for my project is that for Schelling, one cannot speak of this decision as if it were describing a conscious being making a choice between existence and non-existence, as it is only in the aftermath of the decision that God becomes actualized—and thereby conscious; as for Schelling consciousness can only emerge in dissonance, differentiation, *and* limitation. It should be clear by now that for Schelling, dissonance and difference are always already present, even in the past that has never been present. Yet without limitation, without stricture and structure, no conscious act—particularly a choice between two visible options that have clear-cut consequences if

selected—is possible. The entry into the realm of choices—and of beings in their actuality, as Schelling states in the quotation above from his *Münich Lectures*—is what happens when the decision is made, prior to this, the dissonance is an indifferent differentiation in which self-supporting opposites could not yet be said to exist. If this is so, is my formulation, ‘the decision is made’ tenable? Can we talk about a decision being made that is prior to consciousness? Žizek certainly thinks so, and for good reason given a number of things Schelling says in the *Freedom* essay that we shall return to in a moment; yet I worry that privileging the moment of decision as God’s unconscious decision in which he chooses himself, leads us back to the concerns of onto-theology that occupied our study in the last chapter. I am more inclined towards Duque’s reading of decision. Discussing the *Freedom* essay he writes, “so ... ground’ and ‘existent’ emerge together, *at once*, suddenly, in the moment of decision. But, whose decision is this? It seems that it can only be the decision of Existence itself.” Yet for Duque, even to say this is to say too much, as this question ‘whose decision?’ asks for a subject “when it is the *de-cision itself* ... that generates the subject” (Duque, 2007: 73). Making the move that Žizek does (a move that is arguably made by all psycho-analytic readers of Schelling³³), to posit this decision as the property of a not-yet-constituted subject seems to ignore Schelling’s warning about the unprethinkability of decision. He writes, “this primordial deed becomes a beginning that can never be sublimated, a root of reality that cannot be reached through anything” because “the decision

³³ See, for example, Adrian Johnston, *Ghosts of Substance Past: Schelling, Lacan, and the Denaturalization of Nature*, in *Lacan: The Silent Partners*, ed. Slavoj Žizek, (London and New York: Verso, 2006). Johnston’s argument in this essay is both lucid and insightful, however it amounts to little more than a recapitulation of the work done by Žizek on Schelling, and I fear he falls into the same traps of overdetermining the past in Schelling. Alenka Zupancic’s *Ethics of the Real: Kant, Lacan*, (London and New York: Verso, 2000), could be cited here as well. While this text does not focus on Schelling, her account clearly bears the same trajectory as Johnston and Žizek in accounting for the emergence of ethical character than an unconscious decision, via a reconfiguration of Lacan’s *vel*, or forced choice, in terms of Kant’s work on radical evil and Schelling’s *Freedom* essay.

that would make any act into a true beginning may not be brought before consciousness. It may not be *recalled*, which right means as much as taking it back” (Schelling, 2000: 85). We have thus returned to the logic of unprethinkability that the previous chapter spent so much time elucidating.

Given that Schelling’s description of the unprethinkability of decision here is focused upon the ungraspable or unattainable character of this decision to thought, why would he choose to describe in terms that are, in some sense, ready to hand for humans? Why would Schelling, in this account of the emergence of being offer a description of emergence that relied upon such anthropomorphic language, when elsewhere—though much later—he would simply say, “being is the first, thinking is only the second or the consequence” (II/1, 587)? It is here that the analysis of Nietzsche’s passage from the beginning of this section becomes helpful. Is it merely a limitation of our grammar that we cannot think decision decides, or even better, just ‘decision happens’? Or even better yet, being is (and this is the sense that I draw from Duque saying that the decision belongs to existence, if it has an owner at all)? If we read Schelling’s account of decision in a manner that takes his demand about the unprethinkability of decision seriously, we are left having to conclude with Duque that, “Nobody, *Nie-mand*: no human being and no God has decided” (Duque, 2007: 74). And, moreover, if we take Schelling’s account of the eternal past—and the eternal beginning—seriously, we shall see that this decision has never happened precisely because it is always happening as long as being continues to unfold. Yet this seems to be a lot of work to ‘save’ Schelling from himself and his word choices—what other reasons would Schelling have had for offer such a torturous account of God’s past? He has already told us in the *Freedom* essay, when he introduces *Sehnsucht*, the key to decision in his text: he wants to bring

this account to a level that is accessible to the human. He wants to make it simultaneous accessible to human thought, while also making a robust account of human freedom possible.

Section III The Ecstatic Emergence of the Human

Recall that immediately prior to introducing *Sehnsucht*, or longing, in the *Freedom* essay, Schelling writes, “If we want to bring this being [Ground, or Nature—in God] nearer to humanity, we could say it would be the longing [*Sehnsucht*] that the eternal one feels to give birth to itself” (I/7, 359). In German, he writes, “*Wollen wir uns dieses Wesen menschlich näher bringen,*” and then goes on to articulate this account of ground as longing. This is the third time in the last two chapters that I have brought up this quotation, and I would finally like to make good on it. I will explore Schelling’s motivation for framing his introduction of *Sehnsucht* in these ways as a means to answer the questions with which I closed the last section—why these drives? Why God’s decision? There are at least two reasons for Schelling’s desire to make his account accessible to humans: first, he wishes to give an account of the origins of things that preserve the possibility of human freedom; and second, it enables him to give an account of why he thinks that our thinking must always be ecstatic and dialogical. I will explore these two motives in an attempt to lay the foundation for a new way of thinking about evil in Schelling’s writings in the next chapter. I will follow the standard line that evil is the power of contraction take precedence over the power of expansion, but the manner in which I will do this is by attending to Schelling’s demands about thinking movement and becoming.

Both of Schelling's motivations for his manner of discussing decision as the unprethinkable are broached by one central term in Schelling's text, the gravity of which we have not yet engaged: ecstasy. Schelling says, "every removal or displacement from a place is ecstasy" (Schelling, 1969: 41). Why does he begin to discuss ecstasy in this text? Largely because of his concern with the advice of those who he refers to as the "dimwits" who advise "beginners in philosophy" along the path of the question of self-knowledge—but not the question as such, but only when it is meant in a particular way. Schelling explains:

there are so many dimwits who are always shouting at beginners in philosophy to go into themselves – into their deepest depths, as they say; but this only means so much as always going deeper and deeper into one's own limitations. The human need is not to be placed *in* oneself, but *outside* oneself. (Schelling, 1969: 40)

What were humans originally supposed to be that has been lost? Schelling explains this immediately afterwards—*eternal freedom*; yet we are supposed to be eternal freedom—thought of as the overflow of being—*re-achieved*. Schelling writes, "Humanity is permitted to be another beginning; humanity is thus the reconstructed beginning" (Schelling, 1969: 33). For Schelling, the destruction of freedom—or better; human existence which has not yet re-achieved this eternal freedom—takes place when we begin to think in terms of rigid distinctions between subjects and objects. Insofar as this is the case we rigidify, isolate, and freeze the world around us in such a way that it is no longer able to move. Schelling goes so far as to say that when we isolate the absolute subject as an object, it "vanishes" (Schelling, 1969: 38). This would seem to be in complete accord with the manner in which the absolute was framed in the previous chapter, i.e., as pure possibility, pure movement and mobility. Freezing and isolating this movement is to make it disappear as what it is and thus to lose our ability to experience freedom's emergence. Furthermore, we hinder and isolate the

“external world” at the same time as we place limits on what we are—an isolated monadic subject. If the self that we are is defined exclusively as over and against a world of dead matter—and I take this to be Nietzsche’s point when he asserts that ‘things’ only emerge when we give the I priority—than it is clear that we are back into a situation in which the old problems of free will and determinism will assert themselves. If we are in isolation from nature, then we have to begin to ask about how we can possibly be said to act freely given the seemingly necessary structure of the unfolding of the laws of nature, which are bigger and larger than us, and within which we search for our free will. But, as has been said repeatedly throughout this project, these problems only emerge for us insofar as freedom is conceived of as the spontaneity of a subject. Schelling’s solution to this problem of the limitations of subjectivity is ecstasy: “How else can humanity begin again, in order to again become what it once was—wisdom, namely the self-knowledge of eternal freedom—other than by *displacing* itself from this place, setting itself *outside of itself* (Schelling, 1969: 40)?”

The question of self-knowledge is thus not to be despised as such, rather, what is needed is an entirely new way of thinking the self so as to reconfigure the object of the question of self-knowledge. What if the real thrust of the *gnothi seauton* of the Delphic oracle is that it is not about the self as such? Wirth explains Schelling’s reconfiguration of the question of self-knowledge as follows:

If philosophy has traditionally been construed as a conceptual grasp of first principles, then the Copernican Revolution for Schelling led concept-driven and self-enclosed philosophy to its Other, to the thought and the sensation of the incomprehensibility of its origin—a thought and sensation that does not define the *cogito* but rather disrupts the finality of all boundaries. (Wirth, 2003: 120)

Here, we should turn to an assertion that Schelling makes in 1806, in which he sounds surprising like Nietzsche. He writes, “The I think, I am, is since Descartes, the fundamental

error in all knowledge; thinking is not my thinking, and being not my being” (I/7, 148).

Perhaps here we are returning to the “related matters” pointed to in the title of the *Freedom* essay, the relations that I must have to be the human that I am. Here, Schelling’s account of God’s desire—the peculiar desire without an agent that we saw on the first half of this chapter—serves as a guide for our need to lower ourselves before the absolute. The irony of his account in *Ages of the World* is thus that his account, while making things more comprehensible to humans by anthropomorphizing God, gives such a strange account of the God that is created in our own image, that we may no longer be able to recognize ourselves anymore after tarrying with the dark night of the past. If we come to ourselves by investigating this internally bifurcated God that is ecstatic and more than itself, how are we to think about ourselves? By bringing things nearer to the human, then, Schelling distances us from our common sense understanding of who and what we are. His text simultaneously plays on our common-sense understandings of who we are, and thus gives an account of God’s emergence that resonates with our self-understanding.

At this point it may be instructive to turn to Schelling’s account of the emergence of the human in the *Naturphilosophie* more explicitly so as to get a handle on why Schelling thinks that humans—and all of nature—are fundamentally ecstatic. Joseph L. Esposito explains that given Schelling’s emphasis upon the primacy of existence—in this case, the primacy of nature—before thought, “the first task of philosophy is not to chart the realm of the self’s unconditioned, reflective experience, but to understand the nature of the original relation between the self and nature” (Esposito, 1977: 35). To get a handle on how Schelling conceives of this relation, let us begin with his *First Projection of the System of the Philosophy of Nature*. Schelling writes:

Each organism is itself nothing other than the collective *expression* for a multiplicity of actants, which reciprocally limit themselves to a determinate sphere. This sphere is something perennially enduring—not something merely fading into the background as appearance—; for it is that which *emerges* in the conflict of actants, the monument as it were, of those activities grasping one another; it is the *concept of that change itself*, which is the only enduring thing in the change. (I/3, 65)

What is at stake for Schelling in this quotation is the organic as such—the sphere in which any particular entity gains its identity only insofar as it belongs to a whole that constitutes and is constituted by its parts. Schelling further determines the organic when he writes, “the organism is ... what it is, without an external *effect*.” In other words, what it means to be organic is to be one’s own cause, i.e. “simultaneously cause and effect of itself, means and end.” Thus, there has to be some sort of *motor*, a means of self-perpetuation of those things that fall into the organic in order for them to be what they are.

What exactly is this means of self-perpetuation? In the *First Projection* this is described in terms of the process of what I will call the expansive and the inhibitive forces in nature. All things that *are* by nature come to be only via the interplay of these two forces within their actants, i.e. the composite parts of which by which they are constituted. This is made most clear in Schelling’s proclamation that we must understand nature as its own enactment, the *process* itself and not merely via a conceptual determination of action. To think of nature as a series of happenings as opposed to thinking the happening in its occurrence is to turn nature into a dead mechanism.

That said, the movement of nature is not pure fluidity, without something providing an occasional blockage nothing would happen: light needs shadow, heat needs magnetism, lightness needs gravity insofar as the world is to *become* at all. Thus all parts of an organism must assert themselves as more than parts in order for them to exist at all, yet in the end

they must be made subordinate to the movement of the whole. This process makes up the definitive character of the unfolding of nature. This bivalent interchange between the part and the whole must take place at all levels of the natural in order for nature to be what it is. Thus, no individual part of nature, or it may be more appropriate to say no individual instantiation of nature is ever truly pure product. Nature is essentially active, and thus all organisms contained within it are pure activity as well. It is for this reason that Schelling writes, "In a word, one must simply *deny* all *permanence* in nature itself ... The key problem of the philosophy of nature is not to explain the *active* in nature ... but the *resting, permanent*" (I/3, 17). This is clearly not to say, however, that individuals do not assert themselves within nature, as Schelling posits it as a task for those of engaging in the philosophy of nature to think rest. But this is precisely because of the necessity of the tension between the expansive, or active, and inhibitive forces that make nature what it is.

In the *Naturphilosophie*, Schelling describes the contractive force of nature as the "fluidizing force" of universality, which is described in terms of heat, by which all things will return to a formlessness "*receptive to every form.*" The image of such fluidity is clearly the image of homogeneity wherein all individuality is decimated, however, such an impulse is counteracted by the "individuality of all original actants." The desire of the individual to preserve itself as what it is in its engagement with the fluidizing force of the universal "gives the drama of a struggle *between form and formless.* That product that is always becoming will be conceived continually in the leap from the fluid to the solid, and conversely, in the return from solid to fluid" (I/3, 33). Here we get a picture of the pure unmotivated surging forth of existence. Life justifies itself in the *Naturphilosophie*; there is not a question of where nature is going.

The abyss of the organic begs the question of the perspective from which we are engaging it. Insofar as we appreciate the movement of the organic to be something that is self-vindicating, self-completing, self-causing, and self-effecting, who are we to ask about the *meaning* of nature's activity? Insofar as nature taken as a whole, meaning the entirety of the movement and surging of nature is appreciated as the movement of life and as an organism, we are merely an organ within the whole. However, just as disease within the human is encountered as the upsurge of one organ over all others, i.e., the attempt of one organ within an organism to assert itself as dominant, or the complete failure of one organ which thus leaves the whole process out of order, the human has an identical capacity within the whole of nature insofar as we understand the human as organ. And just like all other organs, humans must perish: Schelling writes, "neither vegetation nor life is anything other than the constant awakening of slumbering activities, a constant decombining of bound actants" (I/3, 39). This awakening of slumbering activities is the returning to a partial fluidity of the solidity of matter which wants to "go to ground." Just as soil may want to stay as what it is, the plant will come along and return the solid matter to a means of a production of energy, which is in itself a type of fluidity *qua* movement. However, just as the sun awakens this process, all individual products are eventually subordinated. "*The individual must appear as a means of nature, the genus as the end*—the individual expires [*untergeben*] and the genus remains—if it is true that individual products in nature must be seen as abortive attempts to exhibit the absolute" (I/3, 51). All individual instantiations of the whole will perish by necessity insofar as it is impossible that any individual *qua* individual could ever suffice as a whole unto itself. From the perspective of the whole, all individuals must be subordinated, as "abortive attempts of nature" (I/3, 52) insofar as the division of

these two principles is necessary for them to maintain themselves as what they are. In the absolute, there is absolute indifference, absolute identity, such that these two principles and an infinity of other principles could exist without coming into an antagonistic relationship with one another. However, insofar as there is to be *existence*, nature, the antagonistic relationship of the separation of the expansive and inhibitive principles must hold sway. Insofar as things are to exist, it is impossible that such an indifference could be achieved, as this would mean the end of all movement.

How are we thus to think the status of the human in the *Naturphilosophie*? It is clear that the question must be that of the human as a species and not explicitly about a particular human's perspective onto the whole, but let us not forget that "each sphere to which nature is limited must again contain an infinity in itself, within every sphere other spheres are again formed, and in these spheres again others, and so on to infinity" (I/3, 55). Thus the question of the status of the individual human in a sense carries as much weight as the species as a whole as all of us are constituted by an infinity of organic systems all the way down into the smallest cells in our bodies. The status of the whole of nature as an organism within which the human is part and parcel is made absolutely clear insofar as Schelling understands nature as an absolute organism which is not found in any single "product", but only in the congruence of all of the infinity of products of the development of nature. As Esposito quite provocatively explains, "A thing is actually a locus of activity resulting from the interaction of several or all other parts of the community" (Esposito, 1977: 62). Thus the human does not have a necessarily privileged relationship with which to engage the question of whole of nature, or the meaning of nature, but it does have as much of a position to do so as everything else.

Just as Spinoza struggles in his *Ethics* in writing it from what he calls the second type of knowing, reason, whereas the objective is something which resembles intellectual intuition, any attempt of Schelling to engage the question of meaning of nature, or merely to recapitulate the unfolding of nature will necessarily have a humanized tint to it. After all, what perspective can we speak from other than that of the human? However, just as in the end of Spinoza's *Ethics* wherein "intellectual love of God" collapses the particularity of the human perspective back into a more unified experience wherein the reciprocity and participation of all of the modalities of substance loses its temporal sequentiality and we can thus open up the whole to itself *sub specie aeternitas*, human understanding of nature which grasps it in its essence will recoil onto the perspective of human. Here to quote Merleau-Ponty, "Not only must Nature become vision, but human being must also become Nature" (Merleau-Ponty, 2003: 47). As humans we always begin where we find ourselves in our investigation, but in the unfolding of this investigation the place from which the inquiry is undertaken may disappear. It may be only through the human that nature is articulated, but in this process of articulation the human will realize itself to be what it is, *part* of a whole and nothing more.

This instance of the recoil on the position of enunciation that is manifest in the human and the question of the meaning of nature is one which appears frequently throughout Schelling's texts. Discussing Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, and with regards to the opening, as the possibility of the reconstruction of the beginning—which we have been discussing in this chapter as decision and in the previous chapter as the overflow of presence—that humans present in nature Merleau-Ponty writes, "Schelling presents the appearance of the human being as a species of the re-creation of the world, as the advent of

an opening” (Merleau-Ponty, 2003: 47). For Merleau-Ponty the image of the human in Schelling’s nature holds a central location, but it is one that must not be mistaken as being the center and culmination that is definitive of nature. It may be only through the human that nature becomes meaningful, but this is precisely because of the fact that the question of meaning is not one that exists outside of the perspective of the human. It does not make sense to categorize nature-in-itself, i.e, nature excluding the human as meaningful, as the question of meaning is a question that only arises once the human comes on to the scene. This is clearly one of the ways in which we can interpret Schelling’s assertion from the *Freedom* essay wherein he asserts that he desires to bring the development of the world nearer to the human by discussing longing. However, this is not to say that the account that Schelling gives in his *Naturphilosophie* is somehow or other more physiocentric than the account we get in the *Freedom* essay; insofar as the human is part and parcel of nature this also does not imply that someone something “unnatural” has been done to nature when the human makes it meaningful. The question of meaning is as natural as anything else that emerges from nature, and it occurs only because of the unfolding of nature. Merleau-Ponty writes, “We are the parents of Nature of which we are also children. It is in human being that things become conscious by themselves; but the relation is reciprocal: human being is also the becoming-conscious of things” (Merleau-Ponty, 2003: 43).

The final phrase in this quote from Merleau-Ponty is absolutely crucial to understanding why Schelling describes humans as the beginning reconstructed and freedom *re-achieved*. Given that Schelling’s project in the *Erlanger Lectures* is to give an account of our knowing of the absolute, we must attend to precisely why Schelling would say, “*Only in knowing is there still an open point where wisdom* [which is another name Schelling uses for the

absolute] *can still search for and find itself*" (Schelling, 1969: 28). Why Schelling would say this is a question that remains to be answered, however we have already answered *how* he thinks humans are able to know the absolute: we are ecstatic. Our belonging to the organic demonstrates that we, like all things—including God on the account given in *Ages of the World*—are only constituted as what we are only insofar as we participate in a system, a referential totality, that is much larger than our particularity. To explain what this means for Schelling and why this means that humans can serve as the 'becoming-conscious of things,' we must explain why Schelling would say that human consciousness is "*a self-knowledge of eternal freedom*" (Schelling, 1969: 32).

Section IV

Schelling's Philosophizing: The Experience of Freedom

Schelling quickly tells us a number of things that saying humans are a self-knowledge of eternal freedom *cannot* mean: immediacy (Schelling, 1969: 36) and self-knowledge thought of as introspection (Schelling, 1969: 37). With regards to the Schelling says, "what counts in philosophy is the ability to elevate oneself above all knowing that merely begins with *the self*." Is this not an echo of the force of contraction that must debase itself so as to desire freedom? This, in turn, means that we must be willing to give up on all conceptions philosophy as a "demonstrative science which first goes out from one thing known in order to arrive at another thing known." For Schelling, philosophy is not such a demonstrative science, but rather a "*free act of spirit*; its first step is not a knowing, but is better expressed as a not-knowing, *a giving up of all human knowledge*" (Schelling, 1969: 38). He then characterizes this act by which the human would know the absolute as, the act that "people have sought to express...through the name *intellectual intuition*" (Schelling, 1969: 39). At this point, he offers

an astonishing account of intellectual intuition—an account that ought to have had far-reaching effects on the way people read his earlier thinking on the absolute and intellectual intuition, though, with rare exception this does not seem to have taken place.³⁴ Schelling writes:

It was called intuition, because it was accepted that in intuiting or (as this word has become common) in seeing the subject *loses* itself, it placed *outside of itself*. It was called *intellectual* intuition in order to express that the subject is not lost in a sensible intuition, in an actual object, but rather is lost in, or gives itself up in, something that cannot be an object. Simply because this expression is need of an explanation, it is better to wholly set it aside. Rather, the name *ecstasy* could be used for this relation. Namely, our I is placed *outside* of itself, i.e. out of its place. Its place is to be subject. But when confronted with the absolute subject it cannot be subject, because the absolute subject cannot comport itself as object. Thus it must *abandon* the *place*, it must be set *outside itself*, as something that is no longer existing. Only in this self-abandonment can the absolute subject burst open to the subject in its self-abandonment, and we thus behold it in wonder. This approximates the peaceful expression which the gentle Plato himself uses when he says: “Before all others, the primary affect of the philosopher is – wonder, *to thaumazein*,” and he adds, “because there is no other beginning of philosophy than wonder” (Theaetetus, 155d). (Schelling, 1969: 39)

Here we find Schelling laying all of his cards on the table, and giving us much to tarry with. Prior to offering a thorough account of the large-scale ramifications of this passage, let me recapitulate his assertions. Intellectual intuition must be rethought, or reconfigured, as ecstasy for two reasons: first, in intuiting, a thinker is always placed outside of themselves,

³⁴ Two exceptions are Jason Wirth’s chapter on *Direct Experience* in his *Conspiracy of Life*, and Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback’s *The Work of Experience: Schelling on Thinking Beyond Image and Concept*. Most other prominent Schelling commentators do little work to engage Schelling’s later reflections upon intellectual intuition when they discuss the function of intellectual intuition in his early writings. For example Dale Snow argues that “the possibility that Schelling borrowed [Fichte’s arguments regarding the absolute and intellectual intuition] virtually unaltered from Fichte is not to be dismissed out of hand” (Snow, 1996: 48). While I have no intention of dismissing such a point out of hand, I do worry that her account does not do enough to attend to Schelling’s untimeliness in relationship to his contemporaries. While he makes similar hermeneutic decisions, Alan White is a bit more attentive to Schelling’s later reconfigurations of intellectual intuition. He explains, “according to Schelling’s arguments, the Zen Buddhist who experiences *satori* after years of meditation and asceticism sees nothing different from what the philosopher who reflects on the nature of absoluteness sees: the absolute is beyond all distinctions” (White, 1983: 32). The problem with this account, though I appreciate White’s extension of Schelling’s thinking, is that he is still emphatic that this encounter with the absolute is reflective. He does very little work to explain what this means for Schelling, and thus risks leaving him open to the very critiques of reflection Schelling levels in the *Erlanger Lectures*.

for the experience of intuiting is always an experience of reception, reception of something that is by necessity external to the one who intuits;³⁵ second, and much more importantly, what is attended to in ecstatic thinking is something that cannot be made an object—thus the disappearance, the vanishing of the absolute when we attempt to engage it as such. This is crucial in understanding Schelling’s rethinking of intellectual intuition, as his suggestion is not that the object of intuition is noumenal, and thus evades—by necessity—any attempt to attend to it via our engagement with the sensible manifold, but rather, that what is attended to cannot, under any circumstances, be objectified and remain what it is. Of course, the same account could hold for the noumenal in Kant; the difference in Schelling is that this *Sache* to which he wants to attend to is not behind the back of experience; rather, it *is* precisely what we experience prior to our rigid conceptualization of experience into atoms.

I argue that Schelling’s desire, undertaken in this passage quoted, to rid himself of the phrase ‘intellectual intuition,’ comes from the philosophical baggage that this term carries with it. Even though, as Wirth points out, Schelling’s employment of the phrase, intellectual intuition, has always been idiosyncratic, particularly as Schelling “is extending [intellectual intuition and the I] to all of nature.” And even more so, because what this intuition is, “is an intuition into the pure positing [*reines Setzen*], without why, of all *things*” (Wirth, 2003: 123), I believe Schelling rids himself of the term to avoid its larger connotations. This is why he introduces ecstasy as the new name for the manner in which we philosophize: what we encounter in this moment of ecstasy is of such a nature that it demands to be attended to as

³⁵ The obvious critical response to this assertion is to point to what Kant would call the internal form of intuition, i.e., time as the apriori form of intuition. Presumably one would point to this to say that not all intuition takes us out of ourselves, yet that seems to beg the question of what the self is. It is quite possible that in internal forms of intuition, we are intuiting ourselves, but at such a moment, in which the self is both intuer and intuited, it seems as though we would to have two selves. In fact, this is precisely the critique of the *cogito* that Schelling gives in his *Münich Lectures* (I/10, 11).

subject, which in this instance we can hear more or less as meaning activity—a term that, as we have seen from our foray into the *Naturphilosophie* describes all things, including ourselves. Because what we engage in ecstatic thinking is active it demands that we do not bring to bear a pre-formed template of interpretation to it, and rather, let it unfold on its own terms, just as the force of contraction in God must debase itself before eternal freedom such that freedom can be what it is. This requires a self-emptying, an admittance of ignorance, or even weakness or insufficiency, in the face of the overflow of presencing that is the absolute; an overflow that is only possible insofar as the origin disassembles and withdraws. It is the experience that we have at this moment that Schelling describes as wonder—and I argue is the experience of freedom.

How does this wonder play itself out in ecstasy? Schelling describes a process of moving from a desire for knowledge—which itself is a state of not-knowing—to a recognition of our lack of knowledge—which is a “knowing not-knowing” (Schelling, 1969: 45). What is essential in this process is Schelling’s playing with the word *Erkennen*, in its numerous forms.³⁶ Schelling describes the process of moving from ignorance to awareness of ignorance in the face of the absolute as a crisis; it is a crisis that begins with our attempts to *know* the absolute. Yet, for Schelling, “knowledge is bound” (Schelling, 1969: 52). Any attempt to make the absolute into an object that could be grasped in a propositional assertion, as if it were a noun—the kind of knowledge one has in *Erkennen*—betrays the ingraspable, immutable character of the absolute. In fact, in separating ourselves off from

³⁶ I have chosen to translate *Erkennen* throughout the *Erlanger Lectures*, as ‘to know,’ and its gerund form *Erkennende*, as ‘knowing,’ though it should be noted that these words are usually translated in some way that relates to our word, ‘cognition,’ or ‘awareness.’ My translations may be belabored at this juncture, but I worry that translating these terms as ‘to cognize’ and ‘cognizing’ would not only be more cumbersome, but would bring along more baggage (i.e., our sense of cognition as the term is used in cognitive science) that I do not believe is present in Schelling’s text.

the absolute so as to make it an object for our knowledge, “the absolute subject ... announces itself as that which the other [consciousness] cannot know” (Schelling, 1969: 43). We can only come to know the absolute when we encounter it as something that is excessive to our attempts to make it our own, to appropriate it as if it were a simple object opposed to ourselves as subject. When we recognize the limit that conceptual determinations place upon our attempts to appropriate the absolute, it regains its status as subject, as what is essential, in our relationship of knowing, and thus we become aware of our ignorance. It is no longer a not-knowing that exists “externally as in the beginning, but rather internally” (Schelling, 1969: 45). However, this internalization of eternal freedom is not a way of making what was subject, what was essential, merely into something for us. Rather, in this instance, we recognize that we are what we are only insofar as we are excessive to ourselves. At this moment we are *knowing* ourselves as eternal freedom, i.e., we too are movement, we are ecstatic into the process of the unfolding of nature. It is for this reason that it is appropriate, on Heidegger’s terms, to call Schelling’s reconfiguration of wonder and ecstasy a *Grundstimmung*—such ecstatic engagement discloses the whole. Thus our self-knowledge is only possible as a knowing of the whole, insofar as the whole is ecstatic and reciprocally determining, which, as we have seen, is a consequence of both Schelling’s account of the decision of the rotary motion of the drives and his thinking of the organic.

This knowing of the whole that our thinking, insofar as it is based upon a knowing not-knowing, actualizes is one reason why Schelling wants to account for the origins of things as lying in duplicity, dissonance, and crisis. Our thinking is able to knowingly repeat the structure, that is, reconstruct the life of God, insofar as it accords itself to the ways in which things unfold. Our process of coming-to-knowledge is a repetition of the very

unfolding of existence, and is the coming-to-consciousness of this unfolding for the first time. This is why we can say that our pursuit of self-knowledge is the whole's pursuit of its own self-knowledge, but only insofar as we are willing to debase ourselves as the center. As Wirth says, "Human freedom demands that humanity repents its humanity as the very condition for the possibility of its humanity" (Wirth, 2004: 6). We, and the happening that is being, can only be given back to ourselves as what we are insofar as we attend to this whole—and accordingly to ourselves—in a particular manner.

Schelling describes this manner of attention to the *Sache*, this kind of knowing, as *Besinnung*, or contemplation. This kind of knowing is a knowing that "changes along with movements of the absolute subject" (Schelling, 1969: 47), and it is the knowing that is proper to philosophy. Schelling writes, "In philosophy, nothing less than the pure, finished principle is sacrificed" (Schelling, 1969: 50). Consonant with his times, Schelling does say that "human consciousness is originally the internal, ground providing, support, or subject, of eternal freedom coming to itself." Yet, even though this grounding function of human consciousness is described as reflection [*Reflexion*], it is not, strictly speaking, the activity of a subject; for human consciousness, as this subject, "is this subject in silence" (Schelling, 1969: 50). Rather, our very existence is the mirror that reflects the life of the absolute. If we were to demand the appearance of the absolute, i.e., if we were to posit it actively as an object opposed to ourselves as subject, it would be cancelled by our wanting, our desire to possess it. Schelling explains, "insofar as he [any human] wants to attract this pure consciousness, he destroys it. Hence the contradiction: whatever humans wants it made to nothing *through* their wanting" (Schelling, 1969: 51), as in our wanting we reduce all things to ourselves, as if we actually knew what that self was. In our attempts to reduce the ingraspable character of

the overflow of presencing to ourselves, we make an egregious error: we mistake our selves as being constant and self-supporting, thereby ignoring duplicity that is what we are at bottom, a duplicity famously described in *Ages of the World* as follows:

This cision, this doubling of ourselves, this secret circulation in which there are two beings, a questioning being and an answering being, an unknowing being that seeks knowledge and an unknowing being that does not know its knowledge, this silent dialogue, this inner art of conversation, is the authentic mystery of the philosopher. (Schelling, 2000: xxxvi)

Yet again, we find an account of the emergence of self in, and as, crisis. This crisis in the *Ages of the World* is described as the result of the existence of the expansive and contractive principles in humanity, whereas in the *Erlanger Lectures* it is described as the crisis that emerges in the thinker's confrontation with the absolute; and these two crises reflect each other. When taken together, what can these two different accounts tell us about how Schelling understands the act of philosophizing? And again, what can this split tell us about why Schelling chooses to give the account of the decision in God that we see in the *Ages of the World*, particularly in light of the absence of such an account in the *Erlanger Lectures*?

To some extent, Schelling begins to answer both of these questions immediately after this quote from *Ages of the World*, when he explains how the interplay of the expansive and contractive principles in humanity affect his understanding of what it means to know. Having famously asserted that the past is narrated in the first line of this (and all other extant versions of the *Weltalter*) text, he explains that, "everything known, in accord with its nature, is narrated." Yet again, we get a glimpse of Schelling's transcendental inclinations: only that which has already taken place, insofar as it serves as the ground for what we experience today, can truly be known. Yet, he offers us a peculiar account of what the "known" is—or better would be: "the known is not here something lying about finished and at hand since

the beginning. Rather it is that which is always first emerging out of the interior through a process entirely specific to itself” (Schelling, 2000: xxxvii). While this quote is certainly provocative, it does little to explain what this “known” is. His answer, I believe, is the past itself—the past that emerges out of its interiority in the rotary motion of the drives through cision, through a crisis that is repeated in the crisis of human knowing as described in the *Erlanger Lectures*. Note that in both instances—in the process of cision and decision in *Ages of the World* and the process of the crisis of knowing in the *Erlanger Lectures*—this crisis is precisely the conflict between subject and object, i.e., the conflict for what is determinate and essential. Schelling’s account in the *Ages of the World* of the cision within God leads him to assert that, “the light of knowledge must rise through an internal cision and liberation before it can illuminate. What we call knowledge is only the striving toward *anamnesis* [*Wiederbewusstwerden*] and hence more of a striving toward knowledge than knowledge itself” (Schelling, 2000: xxxvii).

This striving towards becoming-conscious-again (for the first time, might I add) of the philosopher is only possible insofar as the very character of existence is determined by the same character of cision and crisis that defines human knowing—otherwise, Schelling would have no reason to describe the philosophical project as such as a project of self-knowledge; much less a project of self-knowledge that proceeds by way of recollection. He describes this same occurrence in the *Erlanger Lectures* when describing our becoming aware of our own ignorance: “it has again *recollected* [*erinnert*] eternal freedom—it now knows this eternal freedom, truly knows it immediately, namely *as* the interior of not-knowing. Thus the ancient teaching that all philosophy exists only as recollection” (Schelling, 2000: 45). We can then see Schelling’s account in these two texts—and every other time he gives such an

account of origins that is ‘accessible to humanity’—is moving in two directions at once: given his constantly re-stated commitment to the principle that like is known by like, he simultaneously gives us a transcendental, and thus descriptive, account of what must be assumed to have happened for our thinking to be as it is today, while at the same time he gives a prescriptive account of how we ought to think, given that our thinking must be in accord with what is to be attended to in our thinking.

His commitment to the principle that like is known by like is most famously asserted in the *Freedom* essay when he writes:

But whoever takes their departure from the theory of physics and knows, as the ancient teaching has it, that like is known by like, will understand that the philosopher maintains such (divine) knowledge because he alone, holding the intellect pure and unobscured by darkness, grasps the god outside himself with the god in himself. (I/7, 338)

As Warnek explains, what this means for Schelling is that “our capacity to know the divine system, and thus to be able to bring freedom to word, is already promised in the nature of human life as itself divine, as belonging to divine nature” (Warnek, 2005: 180). This means, that for Schelling, the self-revelation of God through the unfolding of existence—of which we are part—ensures our participation in God, and God’s participation in us. In the language of Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie*: because the human is able to recapitulate the whole of nature via its intellectual engagement with it, we may worry that Schelling turns the process of God’s unfolding into a teleological project terminating in human consciousness, wherein the whole of nature is thus turned into consciousness, e.g., human consciousness is capable of bringing to light the status of the absolute consciousness which holds sway throughout the entirety of nature, but only insofar as it engages in an anthropomorphic projection. In lieu of such an assertion—and to reiterate—Merleau-Ponty explains: “Hence

the role of the perceived world as milieu of experience, where there is not the projection of consciousness on everything, but rather a participation of my own life in everything, and vice versa” (Merleau-Ponty, 2003: 40). It is easy to take the first portion of Merleau-Ponty’s assertion to still fall into an anthropomorphic engagement, wherein we see ourselves in everything and can act on everything. Such an interpretation is faulty, insofar as it necessitates that one overlooks the all important addendum to this passage, the vice versa—the position of the texts recoil onto the place from which the human must speak. The human is capable of seeing itself in everything exclusively because everything is participating in the life of the human. In other words, the activity of the human is possible only because of an equal priority is attributed to the receptivity, or porosity, of the human in their relationship to the external world. A much younger Schelling describes this exactly when he writes, “of the necessary *reciprocity of receptivity and activity in everything organic*” in which humans participate (I/3, 6). Thus, it is true, Nietzsche’s critique of emergence of the dominance of reason as being tied up with privileging a higher world, or a divine life, to which we humans once belonged can be applied to Schelling, but only insofar as we recognize that the *anamnesis* that Schelling believes describes the activity of philosophizing, is itself the first coming-to-consciousness of this allegedly higher life; and this higher life itself, is no living thing, but as Schuback has it, the “life of life,” and emergence with no agent. If we accept this account of Schelling, he certainly sounds a lot more like Nietzsche than like those who Nietzsche critiques.

The capacity for there to be an engagement between the human and nature insofar as there is this shared capacity to act and to be acted upon necessitates that any attempt to divide the world up into distinct systems of receptivity and pure activity would ignore the

fact that all things which fall under the rubric of the organic share and participate in these two powers. Accordingly, we must think of receptivity and activity, i.e., the participation of my life in everything and vice versa, as being guaranteed by the fact that there is a fundamental, ontological commonality between all things organic. In fact this participation is guaranteed to such a degree, that we continue the tension of the principles of contraction and expansion within ourselves, just as God did prior to decision. Thus, Schelling's account of the unfolding of divinity, and the reciprocity of activity and receptivity between all things organic, enables him to account for our ability to think God's decision—or eternal freedom—and thereby bring freedom to word, as ourselves—thought ecstatically—in our thinking.

Since Schelling holds that only humans are able to be the reconstructed, coming-to-consciousness of creation, the way in which we attend to the world must be measured in accordance with the manner in which the world presences—and this for Schelling is clearly, movement, as he makes clear in the *Ages of the World*: “Movement is what is essential to knowledge” (Schelling, 2000: 4).³⁷ The remaining question is thus: how do we think this movement? How do we think what Schuback calls the “life of life”—an expression that she uses “in order to point out that what Schelling means by absolute is not a concept but an experience, the experience (or intellectual intuition) of the true life” (Schuback, 2005: 69)? But how are we to understand this experience? I have already given a number of hints as to

³⁷ This could certainly appear as a vicious circle, wherein Schelling gives an account of how things happened so as to vindicate his account of what he thinks philosophy should be, however if one were to indict Schelling of this crime, it seems that nearly all other ontological projects could fall prey to the same critique, as any attempt to account for what the world is like is going to be influenced either wittingly or unwittingly by how the person who attends to the world understands what it means to think. If this were a crime, Schelling's commitment of it may only seem more dramatic than others because of his desire to reconcile truth and fable (Schelling, 2000: xxxv); because of this desire his account appears strange and foreign and thereby easier to banish from the realm of philosophy.

how I understand this moment, yet I would like to turn to Schelling's text, in particular to his critique of Hegel from his *Münich Lectures*, so as to get our textual feet under us in our analysis. Here, Schelling assaults Hegel for his employment of what Schelling feels are empty concepts and an empty concept of philosophy. With regards to Hegel's discussion of being, nothingness, and becoming in the *Logic*, Schelling writes:

One cannot properly contradict these assertions, or explain them away as something false; for they are sayings that say nothing. It is as if one wished to carry water in cupped hands, from which again, nothing will come. Here, the mere work of holding onto something that does not let itself be held, because it *is* nothing, takes the place of philosophizing. (I/10, 135)

Soon after this assertion, Schelling clarifies his charge against Hegel, presaging the whole existential and phenomenological movement, when he writes:

Concepts as such exist nowhere, in fact, than in consciousness. They *are* thus objectively taken *after* nature, not *before* it. Hegel took concepts away from their natural place in that he posited them at the inception of philosophy. There he then places the most abstract concepts before all, becoming, existence, etc.; but abstractions can exist in no natural way, nor be held as actualities, without that from which they are abstracted: becoming [*Werden*] cannot be before something becoming [*ein Werdendes*], existence [*Daseyn*] not prior to something existing [*ein Daseyendes*]. (I/10, 141)

Schelling's indictment of Hegel amounts to critiquing him for, as he says, thinking about thinking, rather than thinking about what the basis for thinking is. To do so is to tarry with what amounts to a rigidified abstraction of what is real matter of thinking, thus negating this matter in attempting to encapsulate it and turning it into nothing.³⁸ Contrary to this, as

³⁸ I would like to note, even if only in a footnote, that this critique of Hegel is rather flat-footed. As Duque is quick to note, regarding Schelling's critique of Hegel, "they [both] acknowledge in nature as well the existence of a remainder *actually* irreducible. Against the vulgar interpretation of Hegel, he explicitly maintains such an irreducibility, both in the empirical plane of scientific investigation, as well as in the political plane" (Duque, 2007: 64). He then goes on to give examples of each, but of particular interest is Hegel's assertion that, "It is an aberration of the philosophy of nature that it wishes to make all appearances simple" (*Werke* 9: 106). Nevertheless, Schelling's critique of Hegel is of interest, less for the force of the argument against Hegel, and more for what it actually does indict, i.e., philosophy that tarries exclusively with dead concepts—thinking about thinking without attending to what enables thinking in the first place.

Schuback says, “Schelling insists on a thinking that dares to recognize its nonpriority, that dares to return thought to its ground, namely to the life of life, to eternal freedom, a return to what Schelling even called the ‘unprethinkability of being’” (Schuback, 2005: 69).

Yet how is this perpetual prior, unprethinkable ground to be thought, how can one attend to the condition of “every conceptuality and nonconceptuality”? How is one to attempt to think this boundary of conceptuality? As Schuback points out, even a negative determination of our approach to this *Sache* “retains as its starting point the privilege of the concept as a means of articulating a concept of nonconceptuality” (Schuback, 2005: 70). Yet this fact does not hinder Schelling from moving forward in his account of what our thinking in the face of this unprethinkable basis should amount to. Describing our encounter with the absolute, insofar as this encounter is aware of its ignorance, he writes that humanity:

becomes free through the setting-outside-of-itself, it is the first moment of contemplation [*der ersten Augenblick seiner Besinnung*], and for the first time savors the freedom and blessedness of not-knowing. It is now—in order to give a positive expression—that which we could call *free* thinking. To think is to abandon knowledge; knowledge is bound, thinking is in complete freedom, and the word itself implies that all free thinking is the result of a separation, a conflict, a crisis that has been overcome [*aufgehoben*]. (Schelling, 1969: 52)

Schelling is here rejecting conceptuality, insofar as the concept is conceived of as an attempt to corner and isolate experience, in favor of a stance of thinking that is primarily receptive—an active receptivity that thinks along with the unfolding of the primacy of existence. We are able to think this primacy only insofar as we are part and parcel of the process of the unfolding of existence of nature, and insofar as we are ecstatic in our engagement with it. The movement from this thinking to knowledge is for Schelling always a process of arresting, immobilizing, and retarding the movement of existence in our reflection of it; as he says, “*our* knowledge is immobile in itself” (Schelling, 1969: 55). As

Wirth says, “Any thought, even the thought of the Whole, when left to stand alone, when endowed with the status of a completely articulate word, when left to the tyranny of the garrulous, clots, and inhibits the very Whole that it would honor and think” (Wirth, 2003: 6). Only insofar as we are receptive to the character of the movement of the world around us can we actually come to knowledge, but his knowledge must remain immobile if it ceases to be in conversation with the movement of the absolute, i.e., presencing. This conversation, which Schelling characterizes as the dialogue that is constitutive of philosophy in his famous footnote in the *Freedom* essay, when he writes that, “although it lacks the exterior form of a dialogue, all things within it emerged in a dialogical manner” (I/7, 410) must be kept alive, which requires our willingness to receive and respond, not merely to fix knowledge for all time. We are dependent upon the generosity of being for our ability to think, precisely because without this giving, we would have nothing to think—in fact, we would not be at all.

We are thus able to be reconstructed freedom precisely because we belong to the unfolding of being. As Nancy explains, “No one begins *to be* free, but freedom *is* the beginning and endlessly remains the beginning” (Nancy, 1993: 77). For him, we can only speak of human freedom insofar as we can say that humans belong to “being-in-common, which is the sharing of being” (Nancy, 1993: 73). It only insofar as humans participate in the relations that are open and available to us in light of the free giving of being that they can become humans at all. As Nancy says, “In this relation, “human beings” are not given—but it is relation alone that can give them “humanity”... It is then freedom that gives humanity” (Nancy, 1993: 73). Our freedom, human freedom, lies in our ability to encounter the groundless play of the contractive and expansive forces within ourselves because of our belonging to what Schelling calls the organic, or the overflow of the contractive and

expansive principles, or what Nancy calls being-in-common. Accordingly, Esposito would then have Schelling responding to Kant's table of categories by asserting that community *qua* reciprocal determination must be more originary than either substance or causality, otherwise we cannot explain our experience of multiple things at the same time (Esposito, 1977: 62). From the recognition of the primacy of community, or reciprocal determination, the in-common, or the ecstatic character of all individuals, we can recognize that this same freedom is at play and plays in the eternal beginning—it plays in us. This, as Schelling made clear in his discussion of ecstasy, can inspire wonder. But it is a short step from this wonder to terror. As Schelling says—and here he exhibits that wonder as an attunement need not lead to principial thinking—,

Most people are frightened precisely by this abyssal freedom in the same way that they are frightened by the necessity to be utterly one thing or another. And where they see a flash of freedom, they turn away from it as if from an utterly injurious flash of lightning and they feel prostrated by freedom as an appearance that comes from the ineffable, from eternal freedom, from where there is no ground whatsoever. (Schelling, 2000: 78)

In this encounter with the unmotivated, unintentional surging forth of existence that we encounter at the end of the road for Schelling in the process of transcendental philosophy—whether by a turn inward or outward—we cannot help be inspired to either terror or wonder. It is clear that both responses are entirely appropriate to the matter of thinking for Schelling, but for him this matter of thinking can only be attended to so long as one thinks freely; i.e., so long as one is willing to think in accord with the movements of the unfolding of existence, and attending to the ingraspable character of the absolute as precisely that. Only so long as a thinker is willing to give up on supreme principles and is willing to attend with humility and self-denial to the presencing of things around them—a self denial

that Schelling characterizes as *Gelassenheit* (Schelling, 2000: 63), a *Gelassenheit* that can both characterize the matter of thinking, the letting of being that is eternal freedom and the manner of thinking—will the pure possibility of being be made available to the human. In order for this to take place, we must reorient how we think as such.

Section V The Silence of Science and the Possibility for Evil

Joseph Lawrence explains that philosophy emerges when it recognizes the Socratic insight that “reason completes itself in the knowledge of its own final ignorance” (Lawrence, 2005: 14).³⁹ In discussing this moment of realization he refers to Schelling’s phrase, *das Verstummen der Wissenschaft*, the growing silent of science, which Wirth describes as “the collapse of warrant for any articulation of the Whole, any exoteric account of what has begun as a whole.” For Wirth, this “is the eternal beginning that is an eternal opening, a disequilibrium within thinking that does not allow thinking to orient itself to the nature of its own activity” (Wirth, 2003: 6). The moment in Schelling where this phrase occurs is in the 1811 version of his *Ages of the World*. Discussing the obscurity of the ground as the “indomitable, appearing nature,” Schelling explains that in order to attend to this ground, “I enter into this growing silent of science, which must commence insofar as we recognize that when everything infinite approaches us personally, that it is impossible to properly know any such thing” (WA I, 103). It is only in this growing silent that we can actually attend to the “nonconceptual origin of the conceptual” (Wirth, 2003: 123), and I have argued that at this

³⁹ Lawrence discusses this maieutic moment as the beginning of a ‘philosophical religion,’ which for him names the encounter with openness and possibility that lies in the realization of the underdetermined and contingent character of the eternal beginning. While Lawrence’s essay is extraordinary, I am uncomfortable with his employment of the language of religion, and see no necessity to employ it in describing the human encounter with the *Sache* at issue in both his essay and this dissertation.

juncture we find and reconstruct eternal freedom by recognizing the unprethinkability of being and thereby preserving possibility. At this juncture we experience the freedom of possibility, the freedom of transgression: freedom at the limit.

However, as has been made clear, there is no guarantee that this will happen. Things can go awry. When we cease “to lead all discourses beyond their self-contained provincialism back into dialogue with their irreducible remainder” (Wirth, 2003: 162), and instead, let philosophy collapse back into “the narcissism of the domain of the understanding, [in] its abiding monologue with itself” (Wirth, 2003: 123), we return to the land of knowledge, concepts, and philosophy—thus leaving behind knowing not-knowing, thinking, and philosophizing.

As Wirth has it, “dialogue is not the study of a philosophy. It is the activity of philosophizing” (Wirth, 2004: 14). Schelling explains, “Philosophy does not persist in particular propositions which can be taken and communicated. It is not as easy as this. This method alone is good for nothing” (Schelling, 1969: 4). Soon after Schelling explains, “the distinction between philosophy and philosophizing is like the distinction between having gold and making gold. Whoever philosophizes, also has philosophy” (Schelling, 1969: 7). We have seen what understanding of the self is required in order for philosophizing to take place as the dialogue between human thinking and the unfolding of existence in a manner that takes freedom as both its manner and matter of thinking. Yet what happens when this dialogue turns into the narcissistic monologue of the understanding? What conception of the self is necessitated by this manner of philosophical undertaking? In the next and final chapter of this project, I would like to turn to the consequences of ignoring the dialogical character of our constitution in the face of the unmotivated, surging forth of existence. In

other words, what happens when we bring our templates to the world of experience and insist that the pure possibility of the unfolding of being accommodates itself to these templates? I will argue that both Schelling's discussion of evil in the *Freedom* essay can offer us insight into what happens when we cease attending to the world in a manner that accords with the phenomenological ethos that I have been describing for the last five chapters.

CHAPTER VI

FREEDOM AND THE GREAT HEALTH

In the previous chapter, I presented an articulation of how human thinking that attends to the movement of existence, is a reflection—or as it Schelling has it, a reconstruction—of the very character of being; we saw that the same movement of repetition occurs in Heidegger in Chapter II. For Schelling, we see this coincidence insofar as the movement of being requires the perpetual, mutual self-effacement of the potencies, or principles, in the face of eternal freedom, without which the organic, unfolding, character of existence could not be. Our thinking must mirror this, i.e., attend to the character of eternal freedom, the generosity of being in a manner that accords with this free giving, via self-effacement in the face of existence. This self-effacement amounts to a moment of what Schelling alternately calls a knowing not-knowing, Socratic ignorance, or *Gelassenheit*. For Heidegger, we see this coincidence in his description of being as *Lassen des Anwesens* or *lassen anwesen*, which in turn, demands that we attend to it phenomenologically in a state of *Gelassenheit* (GA15, 364-5).

In light of this account of the letting, and the account of decision given in the previous chapter, we need to turn to another key moment in Schelling's thinking. Given that a decision is always a decision for good *and* evil—as Schelling famously puts it in his *Freedom* essay (I/7, 353), we must tarry with his account of evil. As Nancy has it:

Thinking is not intellectuality, but the experience of its limits. This experience, as the experience of freedom ... is not *ad libitum*. It constitutes existence and must

therefore be grasped at this extremity of the negation of existence. Henceforth, there is an experience of evil that thought can no longer ignore. (Nancy, 1993: 122)

I argue that this experience of evil—as the experience of the nihilation of the generosity of being—whether via environmental degradation, genocide, or even in the case of Schelling, the existence of the nation-state—can be explicitly brought to bear upon Schelling’s rejection of conceptual categorization in lieu of a thinking that “accompanies and witnesses” the movement of being step-by-step. It is our ability to either embrace or deny this play that I will attend to in the first section of this chapter.

Yet Schelling’s characterization of evil, in light of the underdetermined character of being, raises two poignant philosophical concerns, concerns that are entirely applicable to Heidegger as well. First, if Schelling’s account of being leads us to a place wherein the ascription of a persistent identity to any thing taken in isolation is no longer sustainable, then, as I have argued, we must conclude that the only adequate manner in which we can describe any particular entity is in terms of how it both *participates in* and *is itself* a referential totality—or as Schelling would say, it is organic. If I have made a compelling account that this manner of describing entities is the only sound manner to approach the actual way in which entities presence, we are left without any normative measure with which to adjudicate whether or not our engagements with things are good or evil as all identity would be decentered from the top down, i.e., there is no principle.

The second concern that I must attend to in concluding this chapter is the larger epistemic consequence of the description of *Gelassenheit* that I have given in the preceding chapters. Even if I am able to respond in a sufficient manner to the concern that making the world referential totalities from the top down leaves us without any final normative basis

from which to judge the quality of our philosophical engagements, I must attend to how one is able to proceed beyond the mere act of letting-be to active, discursive engagement with entities in the face presenting. Does Nietzsche's concern, as detailed in the previous chapter, not resurface here again? How can I move from engaging the play of presence in all of its excess to actually saying something about that play without at the same time negating the play? It is clear that when Schelling distinguishes thinking and knowledge he has this exact problem in mind (Schelling, 1969: 52)—the question for us is whether or not we are content to leave this distinction stand in such a way that philosophical practice will always remain at odds with itself; either letting being presence and maintaining our phenomenological ethos, or, overstepping this ethos to tarry discursively with the entities we encounter, thus threatening to instantiate the kind of conceptual thinking that has been described in the first section of this chapter.

I attend to both of these concerns throughout the second and third sections of this chapter, and given that the concerns are intimately related to one another, the reader can rest assured that there will be overlap. The fact that these two concerns overlap, however, will enable me to offer a response to both at once. The fourth section of this chapter will argue that the concerns, as described above, may in large part be put to rest if we take stock of what the impetus for philosophical activity is for both Heidegger and Schelling. Insofar as the objective of philosophy—or better, free thinking—is *not* the pursuit of true propositions for either of these thinkers, it is clear that we need not worry ourselves with an external, epistemic measure against which we could verify the truth or falsity of their philosophical activity. If we take the objective, the goal, of both of these thinkers' philosophical activities to be the cultivation of a way of life, which is, I argue, for Heidegger, the path of

questioning, and for Schelling, the activity of philosophizing, then both of these thinkers would make freedom the alpha and the omega of philosophy, precisely because freedom—not the true and maybe not even the good, understood in a certain way—is for both of these thinkers the primary goal of life.

Section I Human Freedom and Evil

Humans, like all beings, contain both the principles of contraction and an expansion (or as Schelling would have it in the *Freedom* essay, nature and God) within them. Yet unlike in all other beings, these principles become separable in humans, this separability of the principles in humans is why God is able to be fully revealed through human life, specifically because the separability generates the possibility of good and evil, a possibility in which enables us to repeat the decision of existence and thereby mirror God. How are we to understand this separability of the principles in humans? For Schelling, it is not decided in advance, for humans, which potency or principle is essential. We are the separable unity of the force of the ground and the force of spirit, wherein the latter is the force of expansion and the force of the ground is the force of contraction, which amounts to the force of selfhood (I/7, 364). This force of selfhood cannot assert itself as dominant in the rest of creation on Schelling's account, it is only when the spiritual force of expansion gets overdetermined and directed by the force of selfhood that we can see evil has emerged.

For this reason, evil does not lie in the separation of forces, nor in their simple separability, rather it lies in an attempt to posit "a false unity of forces" (I/7, 371). The key to understanding the possibility of this false unity of forces lies in Schelling's belief that we can characterize the will of God as the universal will, i.e., the expansive force, as opposed to

the will of the ground, which is the particular will, the contractive force (I/7, 363). These competing forces arrive at an inappropriate relationship to one another whenever the particular will attempts to assert itself over the universal will, or as could be said otherwise, whenever the particular attempts to assert itself *as* universal, i.e., whenever the particular attempts to assert itself as having the ability to determine the whole, rather than recognizing that the determination of the whole hinges upon reciprocally-determining relationship between part and whole. This explains, then, what Schelling means when he says that, “all evil strives to return to the state of chaos” (I/7, 374). It is crucial to note, that for Schelling, this desire to return to chaos that he characterizes as self-will can only assert itself in a decisive manner insofar as the process of unfolding has begun, as only when this process of organic movement has begun to take place could we ever measure the propriety of any particular organ’s activity in accord with the movement of the whole. This is why he says, “therefore, only with the decisive stepping-forth of the good can evil wholly and decisively step forth *as* what it is” (I/7, 380). Existing as a particular in manner that could either be described as good or evil must emerge simultaneously, and can only emerge insofar as the measure, the movement of life as such, has begun. This is why, for Schelling, the unprethinkable decision that lies as the basis of all existence cannot be described as good or evil, rather it is the decision that enables the possibility of describing any particular comportment towards the whole as such.

It is for this reason that I believe we can account for Schelling’s otherwise peculiar explanation of the unity of necessity and freedom in a manner that does not sound so strange to our ears. Before offering an explanation, let us look at Schelling’s account:

Here lies the point at which necessity and freedom must be united, if they are united in general. If this essence [the essence of any particular human] were to be a dead being, and from the human perspective something merely given to us, it would be the case that action could only follow from it by necessity, then accountability and all freedom would be eliminated. But precisely this inner necessity is the same as freedom; the essence of the human is essentially *ones own deed*; necessity and freedom stand in one another as one being [*Wesen*], that only appears as one or the other when observed from different sides; in itself it is freedom, formally it is necessity. (I/7, 385)

The standard manner of interpreting this assertion is that which is offered by Žižek: for Schelling, following Fichte, the subject makes a decision that is outside of all time in which they choose their own character. Žižek describes this as, “the primordial act by means of which choose I my eternal character” (Žižek, 1996: 69). This act is accounted for as being a repetition of the primordial decision that broke the deadlock of the drives in which God was ‘trapped’ prior to the self-effacement of the potencies in the face of eternal freedom. Just as this act of God cannot be accounted for, i.e., we cannot give reasons for it, the decision that determines the essence of any particular human being is likewise inaccessible to humans, yet equally determinate of their character. This is why, as was discussed in the previous chapter, decision is to be understood as the moment in which a “symbolic universe” is set up such that choices that exhibit this character can be made (Žižek, 1996: 67).

Schelling gives Žižek, and nearly all interpreters of his texts, good reason to endorse such an account, and I want to be clear that I am in no way asserting that this interpretation is wrong; such a claim would be pure folly, particularly as Schelling explains that “the act through which ones life is determined in time does not itself belong to time, rather it belongs to eternity” (I/7, 386). He also affirms Žižek’s reading by explaining that this act must be before consciousness precisely because it “it *makes* consciousness.” Schelling himself is all too aware of how peculiar this account sounds, pointing out that it must be

incomprehensible to common ways of thinking, yet he believes it is an account that can have purchase on our experience of being held, and holding ourselves, responsible for our actions. In an attempt to soften the apparent insanity of his assertion he offers the following explanation: when a person does something that is deemed morally reprehensible, we continue to hold such a person responsible for their actions *even if* we believe that such a person was merely acting out a character that was so deeply entrenched in themselves that they could not have done otherwise. As he says, it is never enough to attempt to excuse an action by saying, ‘that is just the way I am,’ even a person who makes such a claim, Schelling says, “is wholly conscious that he is who he is through his own fault [*Schuld*], while at the same time having a right to assert that it would be impossible for him to have been or to have acted otherwise” (I/7, 387).

However, this is not to say that this act by which ones character is generated is an act that is accomplished once and for all, rather, it is an act, the repercussions of which, are felt throughout the whole of ones life. It is an act that, like all things eternal for Schelling, remains a “free and eternal beginning” (I/7, 386). Does this claim soften the blow of his account at all? I believe it does. As I said, I have no desire to accuse the reading of the primordial act that has just been described as being ‘wrong,’ however, I do think that in light of the discussion of decision that I offered in the last chapter, we may have to move more carefully in understanding what Schelling is up to here. If the human act of positing ones character outside of all time is in fact a repetition of the decision through which the deadlock of the drives is broken, and the decision that breaks the deadlock of the drives is a decision without a decider, why would we want to attempt to describe Schelling’s account of the positing of human character as being made by oneself in an unconscious moment before

time? If this decision is, in fact, a free and eternal beginning that constantly plays itself out, would it not be more helpful to understand what Schelling is describing here is simply the cultivation of character that takes place during the life of any particular human?

It is clearly that case that what Schelling is up to in the *Freedom* essay, when taken from the perspective of moral philosophy, is an attempt to explain how we hold people responsible for the roots of their actions and not simply the acts themselves. In other words, we hold people responsible for their character, their bearing, their comportment, which is only made manifest to us through a persons actions. However, as this character is one that is, presumably, cultivated in large part prior to any individual's awareness of its cultivation, it is fair to describe it as 'unconscious.' Yet this does not mean that we do not hold ourselves responsible for this character that we seem to possess by no fault of our own, precisely because we continue to instantiate and reinforce this character through acting it out when we carry out particular acts in the world. I would argue that this is why Aristotle says, "it makes no small difference, then, to be habituated in this way or in that straight from childhood, but an enormous difference, or rather all the difference" (Aristotle, 2003: 1103b25). Just as for Aristotle, one cultivates a *hexis*, an active condition, through being habituated in such a way that one acquires an *ethos*, or a character, that is discernible through how one responds to the particularity of any given situation; Schelling is pointing us beyond any particular action as the site of praise or blame, and rather, back to the actors character, a character which is determinate while at the same time being *necessarily contingent*. I take this to be, again, what Aristotle has in mind when he says, "the virtues come to be present in us neither by nature nor contrary to nature, but in us who are of such a nature as to take them on, and to be brought to completion in them by means of habit" (Aristotle, 2003: 1103a25).

For Schelling, this is possible precisely because of the manner in which he conceives of the role of the human in nature, “Due to the fact that humanity stands in the middle, between the nonbeing of nature and the absolute being = God, humanity is free from both. Humanity is free from God in that humans have an independent root in nature, free from nature in that the divine in them is awakened, in the midst of nature, yet beyond nature” (I/7, 458).

With this account in mind, then, how are we to read Schelling’s insistence about the unity of necessity and freedom? Schelling will go on to say that “true freedom is in harmony with holy necessity” as it is “to freely affirm what is necessary” (I/7, 392). What necessity is he speaking of here that we must freely affirm to enter into true freedom? There are multiple ways in which this assertion could be interpreted, let me restrict myself to two for the moment: first, we could be speaking of, as Žižek says, “‘freely assuming’ one’s imposed destiny,” wherein destiny is heard another word for the necessary fate to which my character binds and obliges me (Žižek, 2000: 18). Second, we could be speaking of the need to affirm the *contingent* necessity that is the acquisition of an active condition as Aristotle describes it. On the surface, these two accounts may appear to conflict with another; however, I think taking these two claims as in conflict would be a mistake. I claim that the best way to make sense of Schelling’s assertion is to understand that the destiny that is imposed upon us that we must affirm is precisely the fact that we must have a character: a character that exhibits how one has come to understand oneself as the separable unity of the forces of contraction and expansion that reign throughout all of existence. For an outside observer, the best way to gain access into a particular individual’s character would then be by attending to how they understand the question of self-knowledge. Those “dimwits who advise beginners in

philosophy to turn inwards” (Schelling, 1969: 40) would then be guilty of privileging the force of contraction; only those who understand that the question of self-knowledge is actually about the way in which we are ecstatic into the whole of the organic would exhibit a proper relationship to the principles. We will have to wait to discuss exactly what the sense of propriety here is, and what kind of measure it entails. For the time being, let us turn to get a sense of how impropriety shows itself as a negative entry point into an account of propriety.

As a manner of returning us to the discussion of the particular and the universal that began this section, let us look at an account of evil that Schelling gives in the *Stuttgart Private Lectures*; Schelling explains that:

Evil is thus nothing other than when a relative nonbeing erects itself to being, thus displacing a true being. From one side it is a nothing, from the other, a most real being [*ein höchst reelles Wesen*]. – There is evil in nature too, *poison*, for example, sickness, and that which offers the highest proof of the actuality of such a collapse of the whole of nature and humanity in particular—death. (I/7, 459)

On this account, evil emerges whenever the force of contraction, the force of selfhood as he calls it throughout the *Freedom* essay, attempts to assert itself as what is essential in any relationship. Thus, whenever any particular entity attempts to assert itself as that which is able to offer a determination of the whole, evil has come onto the scene. As I said a moment ago, another way to understand this by looking at any particular person who attempts to account for who they are by ignoring that they participate in a world, in a referential totality, as it were. In such a case, that person falls into error precisely because they ignore that what makes them able to be a self at all is what is excessive to their body, their brain, and their self-conception(s). Nevertheless, given that the principles are separable in humans, this is a live possibility: it is not at all *necessary* that we correctly understand what

makes us what we are since we can cultivate a character that insists on insistence, rather than on ecstasy.

This should give us some sense, even if all-too-simple of a sense, of what I have in mind when using the term propriety. To some extent, what is at stake here is whether or not one correctly recognizes what makes us what we are: our ecstatic character that we share with all things organic. On this account, then, good would be to recognize that to be a self is to be outside of oneself, and thus if one is invested in self-preservation what must be preserved is the whole to which one belongs. Žizek echoes this reading when he describes Schelling's thinking of good and evil in terms of what he calls "today's ecological crisis": evil, as the inversion of the principles—privileging contraction over expansion—is to make oneself the center of nature in such a way so as to destroy the very means of ones own life. Whereas animals exhibit the force of contraction in their desire for self-preservation as well, only humans are able to make this desire for self-preservation, as manifest in domination, into an "end-in-itself." In other words, only humans could offer a normative ethical theory such as ethical egoism wherein we would advocate and esteem domination as an appropriate path to our goals to such an extent that this path becomes the goal. To put it bluntly, only humans are able to applaud ourselves for shitting where we eat (Žizek, 1996: 63). As Joseph Lawrence says, this is the "most vulgar and widely distributed form of evil, whereby the animal instinct for survival, a mere means and condition of life, detaches itself from the rest of nature and makes itself into an end." (Lawrence, 2004: 184). Presumably then, good would be exhibited insofar as we recognized that our self-preservation required caring for what surrounds us, *but not because what surrounds is a means*, rather because *we are* what surrounds, or environs, us.

A further example that Schelling gives that can illuminate the ways in which humans generate a false unity of the principles is his discussion of the state in the *Stuttgart Private Lectures*. Schelling explains that because the unity in indifference of the potencies breaks down in humanity—and all of existence for that matter insofar as there is not rest—we continue to seek out this unity on earth. However, as Schelling explains, this unity can only be found in the eternal past, prior to the unfolding of existence. Schelling thinks that humans attempt to return to this unity by attempting to create such a unity on earth—a unity which would only seem available to us in death—by creating the state. Schelling explains, “the natural unity, this second nature beyond the first, to which humanity must enforcedly take its unity is the *state*, and the state, in order to put it directly, is thereby a consequence of the curse that rests in humanity. Since the human cannot have God for unity, humanity must submit itself to a physical unity” (I/7, 461). For Schelling this submission to the state is not ideal, as was already made clear in the *Oldest System Program* where it is asserted that “there is no idea of the state because the state is something mechanical ... every state must treat human being like mechanical cogs; and it should not do so; hence it should *cease*” (Krell, 2005: 23). Here, he reiterates what is written in that document: “The state has a contradiction in itself. It is a natural unity, i.e., a unity that can only work through physical means,” yet for Schelling such a physical unity will not actually bind people together, to do that, “a higher talisman is needed.” The state in itself is for Schelling “precarious and temporary” (I/7, 461). Any attempt to bind individuals together into a state will either fail because it actually permits individual human flourishing, in which case, “the power of the state is deprived of the force that belonged to it, or it will be given this force, and then there is despotism.” He then goes on to make his seemingly final proclamation regarding the

state, writing, “My opinion is that the state as such can never find true and absolute unity that all states are merely attempts to find; or, as such attempts to find and become an organic whole, without ever being able to actually attain it, they only find the fate of each organic being, to bloom, to ripen, to age finitely, and finally to die” (I/7, 462). It is this “denial of the state as such” that leads Jürgen Habermas to say, “Schelling alone, of all the great idealists, is brought to the very edge of idealism itself” (Habermas, 2004: 47). I would clearly agree, but want to push Habermas’ claim even further: this rejection of the state is a symptom of Schelling’s shattering of idealism insofar as idealism names an onto-theological enterprise wherein the *theos* is the absolute.

In the examples of both the ecological crisis and the manifold failure of the state, we get a greater sense of what Schelling has in mind when he points to evil and why he would describe it as an attempt to invert the principles, positing selfhood as primary, as the center. In both cases, the force of selfhood is taken to be primary, asserting itself as the means by which the expansive force is directed and guided. In the ecological crisis, the force of selfhood, when taken as primary, brings us to a point wherein the way in which we extend ourselves out into the world is determined and framed by the perspective of a particular self, or even a particular species, such that the whole of existence gets framed as being means to at the disposal of the human. In the state, a particular voice attempts to gather all things together under its rule and in so doing, asserts itself as the universal. As Wirth explains, evil “is the propensity of the creaturely ... to shun the abyss of its origin and the abyss of its future and move towards itself and affirm the presence only of itself. Evil is the force of the *conatus*.” This force of the *conatus*, the force of selfhood, shows itself insofar as, “things feverishly move away from their nonthingly center” (Wirth, 2003: 170). Thus to return to

the question of self-knowledge, for Schelling one who exhibits evil in the manner described above is one who does not recognize themselves as determined by that into which they are ecstatic. This inability to recognize oneself emerges, I argue, due to the cultivation of a character that understands the world to be a world of material objects at the disposal of the I, this character, however, may be most visible to us insofar as we look at how any particular person understands 'self.' As Nietzsche had told us in the previous chapter, it is only with the I that things first emerge, and at this juncture I turn to a more explicit investigation of how evil shows itself through a particular philosophical comportment; a comportment in which the relationship between the self and the world is one wherein we mistake ourselves for the center, for the lawgiver, for the being that brings pre-formed concepts—universals—to bear on particularities thereby negating the movement and flux of those particularities. My claim is: if evil is the particular raising itself to the level of the universal, then any conception of thinking that holds that we bring pre-formed universals to bear on the world of experience is an exhibition of a comportment that could only be characterized as evil.

Section II

Evil, Error, and Conceptual Clotting

How does errancy, or error, manifest itself as evil in philosophical activity?

Regarding error and evil, Schelling explains:

Error is not mere privation of truth. It is something quite positive. It is not lack in spirit, but rather inverted spirit. Therefore, error can be rich in spirit and still be error. – Likewise, evil is no mere privation of the good, no simple negation of inner harmony, but a positive disharmony ... From a certain perspective, evil is the most purely spiritual, because it wages the most ferocious war against all *being*, it even desires to annul [*aufheben*] the ground of all creation. (I/7, 470)

Just as Schelling constantly describes disease and evil to be analogous to one another; he seems here to be drawing a comparable analogy between evil and error. Just as evil is not a lack of the good, but rather an active, or positive, disharmony where in a false unity of the principles is posited; error is described as something quite positive. What kind of positivity is he describing? In order to understand this, I believe we need to return to the *Erlanger Lectures*, so as to more clearly contrast what he is describing here with what he considers proper philosophical activity to be.

In separating out knowledge and thinking Schelling enables himself to describe the objective of philosophy: “*immediate* knowing of eternal freedom” (Schelling, 1969: 58). Yet, due to the fact that this immediate knowledge is only possible insofar as we recognize the need to hold the forces of contraction and expansion within ourselves apart from one another so as to be able to debase ourselves into comportment of thinking that is proper to the absolute, the immediacy is always a kind of false immediacy. It is an immediacy that is possible only insofar as one has first recognized the need for conflict and tension. When this conflict and tension are not recognized, but rather actuated “in a more or less lucky crisis,” philosophers generate errors. Regarding these errors, Schelling says:

Error does not belong to indifference, nor is it mere lack; rather it is a perversion of knowledge (it belongs in the categories of evil and sickness). If all errors were simply false, divested of all truth, they would not be dangerous. Many assertions are clearly of such harmless kind, but it proves too honorable to explain them as errors. There is something venerable about errors; something of the truth lies in them. But precisely this distortion, this perversion of truth, these traits of the original truth that are still recognizable or at least dimly felt in these terrifying errors are what makes errors so horrifying. When inhibited, even the most gentle force – which is active in the cultivation of organic beings – generates the monstrous. This is not terrifying to us because of its dissimilarity, but precisely because of its similarity with the true image, as the human form is still always recognizable. (Schelling, 1969: 61-2)

What, precisely, is Schelling describing here? What kind of error does he have in mind? Given that he is emphatic in this quotation that errors terrify ‘us’ (presumably, we free thinkers) because of their similarity to the truth, we should be clear that he is not describing simple falsity; i.e., simply offering an incorrect account of how things are in themselves. It is for this reason that the account I gave in the previous section regarding propriety and impropriety may be too simple: Schelling clearly is not simply applauding people for ‘getting it right’ and lambasting people for offering propositional claims about existence that do not correspond to what actually is. Rather, as he makes quite clear in his remarks that follow this quotation, error is a description of how one goes about philosophizing, and this again, necessitates an explicit return to the question of self-knowledge.

In the closest thing we as readers get to an explanation of what Schelling has in mind when he diagnoses error, he writes, “error emerges through merely *wanting* to know. One is safe from error only when one does not *only want* to know” (Schelling, 1969: 62). If we restate the force of contraction and the force of expansion as making oneself subject and making oneself object respectively—which seems to be a valid reading insofar as the question of the inverted, or perverted, unity of the principles in the case of evil is really about what is made to be essential, or determinate, i.e., the subject in their relationship with each other—Schelling’s text will be helpful. Schelling explains that humans, by nature, exist in a state of a “*mixture* of truth and falsity” in our knowing relationships insofar as we can only acquire our sense of subjectivity by taking the world around us, and even more so the absolute, to be an object for us. Seemingly, this natural state remains only a simple “distortion of knowledge” so long as one does not attempt to “approach philosophy”: it is only at the juncture wherein one attempts to pass from this natural condition to a place of

self-consciousness of this position that the danger of monstrous error arises: people who have not attended to the conditions of their state of wanting to know—this would be his “merely *wanting* to know”—will proceed to systematically, schematically, and categorically describe whatsoever confronts them as if it were an object. Thus Schelling says, “whatever they find in this knowledge they establish as general, valid, eternal truths” (Schelling, 1969: 63).

This development of general, valid, eternal truths is based upon what Schelling calls a “bias for the present” (Schelling, 1969: 63), a bias that is arguably only possible insofar as we do not reflect upon the conditions of the possibility of our wanting to know. If a philosopher, for Schelling, were to actually inquire into their desire to know, they would recognize that their desire and ability to know is based upon their belonging to that which they desire to know, and that this purported object of knowledge is in fact no simple object at all, rather it moves, it changes, and has a life of its own. Here we would interrogate our natural state of distortion and arrive at a more appropriate conception of selfhood. They would thereby gain their selfhood, and let the principle of contraction play its part, by recognizing how they were ecstatic and determined by what is excessive to them, thus bringing to life that which is encountered, overcoming the bias for the present, and engaging the life of the world. Only a philosopher who makes no attempt to understand the conception of the self or the I that undergirds their desirous engagement with the world around them is able to fall into the kind of error that Schelling is describing. Such a failure necessitates that one mistakes their self for the center of all creation, the lawgiver, the arbiter of true and false. Hence Schelling describes Kant’s error: “he ... simply always assumes that something must be knowable through these forms [the forms of our finite understanding] if

it is to be knowable at all” (Schelling, 1969: 64). Since existence must precede our thinking—so long as we are to have something to think—any engagement with this existence that takes the engager to be the simple lawgiver would seem to mistake the natural priority of the relationship between the thinker and what is thought, or thinking and being. In his *Naturphilosophie*, Schelling makes this exact same point when discussing the experimental method. Expressing his concern with methods of engaging nature that do not interrogate the assumptions required to employ such a method, Schelling explains, “Every question contains an implicit *a priori* judgment; every experiment that is an experiment is prophesizing; experimentation itself is the production of appearances” (I/3, 276). Thus experimentation necessitates, even if unknowingly, controlling appearances, and for Schelling, the true task of a philosophy of nature is to expose the *a priori* commitments of these experiments, and to thereby come to know our role, as inquirers, historically, in determining how the world shows itself to us; or, the task is to understand our contribution, our participation in the disclosure of any entity.

To put these claims in other words: the proper relationship between subject and object, or what should be essential in the relationship between knower and known, is inverted, posited as a false unity wherein the force of selfhood, the I, takes itself to be primary and thus able to give laws to what, seemingly, should be the real provider of measure, the movement of eternal freedom insofar as it presences in the world around us. On this account, then, we could see why Schelling’s characterization of philosophical error is not only analogous to his characterization of evil, but an actual instantiation of it. Rephrasing this point in the language of the particular and the universal, we could say that any manner of approaching thought that conceives of our cognitive activity as an act of

bringing to bear pre-formed concepts, i.e. universals, onto the particulars of the world of experience simultaneously requires that we conceive of ourselves as beings that have the ability to speak for the whole. In other words, to think that thinking is about bringing universal concepts onto the particularities of experience necessitates that I mistake my particularity for universality, just as the totalitarian dictator speaks with the voice of the people and the lumber baron is able to decide for all people about what the meaning of a tree is, i.e., lumber.

At this point, it will be helpful to turn back to the discussion of Aristotle from the previous section of the chapter. If good and evil are ways to describe how we as particulars relate to the whole to which we belong, what we are actually diagnosing when we call something evil—be that the lumber baron, the totalitarian dictator, or a certain kind of thinking—is a *hexis*, a comportment, an active condition, a character. It seems to make little or no difference whether or not one wishes to buy or reject Schelling’s account of the decision one makes about one’s character outside of all time; the result—we hold people responsible for a character that they may not have actively cultivated for themselves—remains the same. The comportment with which I am most concerned at present is the philosophical comportment wherein “the thinking of ‘freedom’ or the generosity of being” is annihilated in lieu of a thinking that attempts to clot and close up the abyssal character of being by bringing things back to a firm and fast ground (Nancy, 1993: 132). Any kind of overdetermining, conceptual thinking that has already decided, for example, that all things which we encounter are substances with predicates—substances the coherency of which is guaranteed by eternal essences contained in some other world—has closed up the abyss, has posited a solid idol in place of the dissembling subject of freedom.

This kind of comportment exhibits itself by conceiving of itself as completed, transparent, certain: as a giver of laws, an arbiter of identities, as one who is already decided and gets to decide for existence. Yet as Nancy says, this *ethos* is one that shows us that, “*Evil is the hatred of existence as such*” (Nancy, 1993: 128), insofar as it is, as Schelling said, a bias for the present, a bias for presence, that neglects such an instance of presence’s belonging to an unfolding of presencing, that has a life, a life that is an excess to my decision about it.

Opposed to this narcissism of monologue—as Wirth described it for us in the previous chapter—Nancy describes an “ethics of freedom”; this is an ethic that, “is the *ethos* itself as the opening of space, the spacious shelter of being in existence, deciding to remain what it is in the distancing from the self, in this distancing that delivers it to its retreat, to its existence, generously” (Nancy, 1993: 146). Here Nancy describes the ecstasy—Wirth would say, dialogue—that makes us what we are. We are given back to ourselves only by distancing ourselves from the force of selfhood that would drag us inwards. Or at least from any sense of selfhood that would ignore that “Self equals what ex-ists as such” (Nancy, 2000: 955). For Nancy and Wirth this is an act that would only take place as the exhibition of a particular kind of comportment, what Nancy has named for us an ethics of freedom, or an *ethos* of openness, which is clearly synonymous with *Gelassenheit*, with releasing ourselves to the world, not so as to debase ourselves as objects before subjects but to recognize that we are what we are only insofar as we participate in the infinite conversation between ourselves and existence.

Thus for Schelling and Nancy, evil becomes a watchword for a comportment that engages the world as the negation, the closure of this generosity, or in other words, evil becomes a return to onto-theological impulses wherein the world is encountered as

determined. Yet in reading both Schelling and Nancy, anyone who has spent time with Nietzsche must be left wondering about the rhetorical force of the word evil. What can evil mean here if it is not a moral evaluation? Even more importantly, how can one make such a claim given the absolute lack of measure that we must find ourselves facing in Schelling's thinking of the absolute or Heidegger's account of *Ereignis*? In the next section I will endeavor to explain some of the ways in which evil can function rhetorically, explaining what I understand to be the Nietzschean critique of Schelling, a critique which Nietzsche himself never made, but certainly—at least on a superficial engagement with Schelling—could have. I will then try to show how and why I think that Schelling can be saved from these criticisms insofar as his account of good and evil has more to do with a very Nietzschean conception of health rather than any simple will to truth.

Section III **Evil and the Force of Selfhood**

Why would someone feel compelled to give an account of evil? What motives are present in using this word; a word that clearly brings with it as much emotional force as any in the English language? Historically, of course, pointing to evil is a way to 'rally the troops'—sometimes literally and other times figuratively. By setting up an opponent or an alternate position as evil, one makes the quick step from offering the distinction between good and bad, "*Gut* and *Schlecht*, the affirmation of difference and the dismissal without prosecution" of those who exhibit capacities or tendencies other than oneself to prosecuting precisely this difference from a moral perspective (Wirth, 2003: 180). Nietzsche's most famous account of this transition occurs in *Towards a Genealogy of Morals*, §13 (KGA, VI/II: 292-295). Having already described the birth of the qualitative distinction between good and

bad earlier in the text, as having been born out of seemingly natural allocations of power and strength, here Nietzsche writes, “—Yet we come back to the problem of the other origin of the ‘good’, as it devised by the man of *ressentiment* himself, which demands to be completed.” Nietzsche then goes on to describe his famous account of lambs and the birds that prey upon them. There is nothing odd, he explains, in the fact that the lambs dislike the birds of prey of who carry them off for their supper—and so long as we abide by the first account of the opposition of the birth of ‘good’ as a descriptive term, we encounter no moralizing. It is only when the lambs play upon “the seduction of language (and the petrified, fundamental error of reason), which understands and mistakes all activity as conditioned through an actor, through a ‘subject’” that evil, as a moral phenomenon, can be attributed as a predicate to a subject.

Nietzsche’s argument is as simple as it is profound. If we engage the world of acts, or deeds [*Thun*], as expressions of themselves rather than as manifestations of the essential character of an actor, we can never point at a person and say, ‘he is evil;’ at most, we could describe the quality of the action itself. If this is the case, there is no subject to which the predicate evil, or good, could be attached. It is only when the lamb—the weak—is able to play upon our prejudice to attribute deeds to agents that the idea of an ‘evil person’ becomes comprehensible. Nietzsche claims that the lamb is thus able to exploit two separate prejudices in order to rigidly instantiate an oppositional relationship between two different kinds of moral beings, i.e., between good people and evil people: first, the prejudice to ascribe actors to acts, and second, the belief that self-preservation is the most basic drive of all beings. The first prejudice has already been explained, the latter, I think follows quite naturally from the first. If we believe that our primary objective in life is to preserve

ourselves at all costs, than anything that threatens that ability to stay alive is clearly a threat. If we simultaneously hold that we, as humans, are agents who have the ability to freely and indifferently choose who we are and what characteristics we will exhibit throughout lives, then those people who pose a threat to the continued maintenance of *my self* can be held responsible, morally responsible, for their choice to exhibit strength. From the perspective of the weak, the man of *ressentiment*, this person then becomes evil.

A few things must be noted about Nietzsche's account so that we can go on and figure out how well it describes Schelling's discussion of evil: the attribution of the predicate evil to a person is clearly a description of an individual's character; it goes to the root, to the core, to the essence. An evil deed is only important insofar as it is the branch of a tree that can be followed so as to discover the roots. Second, the attribution of evil to an actor is fundamentally *reactive*: the category of the good is set up in advance: whatever aids in the preservation of self is good, whatever, and more importantly whoever, hinders that ability to preserve oneself is evil. It is here that the measure, the potentially eternal measure by which one could adjudicate between good and evil first shows itself.

Holding these two points in mind, let us see how his description accords with how we have described evil in Schelling. The first characteristic, evil is something that is attributed to the character of a person whose deeds are merely consequences of said character, clearly holds. I spent a fair amount of time in the previous two sections of this chapter developing precisely this claim. What of the latter claim? Is Schelling's attribution of the term evil to an actor fundamentally reactive, i.e., is the good settled in advance for Schelling, and does he instantiate a measure for good and evil that would assume the place of an eternal principle of morality? The short, and potentially superficial, answer seems to

be yes. However, this is a much harder question to answer—due in large part to the fact that I have yet to give any account of what the measure of evil and error really is for Schelling—and it will require that we spend some time elaborating on how and why Schelling’s account of character does not seem to so easily be grouped together with the man of *ressentiment* as Nietzsche describes him.

Let us turn to the first claim more explicitly: does Nietzsche’s description of evil and the subject hold in Schelling? The answer is yes and no. On the one hand, it is clearly the case, as has been said, that the terms good and evil for Schelling are manners of describing how one comports oneself towards the whole. Thus the terms *are* predicates of a subject. On the other hand, the subject to whom one would predicate these terms is fundamentally ecstatic. This means I am myself only insofar as I am always engaging the world around me. Because Schelling so adamantly takes any simple opposition between subject and object away from us in his account of the organic, it is not clear that we could describe a Schellingian subject as either good or evil—or even as existing—outside of that subject’s active relationships to the world around it. This would mean that there is no static subject to which we could ascribe such predicates with any permanence as if that subject existed outside of relation. However, this does not mean that there is no persistent being that is ‘me’ that due to the inertia of my habits consistently exhibits a particular comportment towards the world around me. Thus, according to the logic of progressive predication as described in the *Freedom* essay, to say ‘Adam is evil’ is to say that I am the antecedent that is the ground, or the condition, of saying evil. I am a unity that is exhibited by the predicate, but a unity about which, nothing could be said insofar as I did not progress or unfold through my predicates, or my consequences. As Schelling puts it, “this is the sense of the

other ancient explanation, according to which the subject and predicate were opposed as the enveloped and unfolded [*Eingewickelte und Entfaltete*] (*implicitum et explicitum*)” (I/7, 342).

Heidegger explains this concept of unfolding predication as Schelling’s “higher concept of identity,” where, “in truth, identity is no lifeless relating of indifferent and fruitless identicalness [*Einerleibheit*], but rather “unity” is immediately productive, progressing towards an other, and creative” (Heidegger, 1995: 95).

Thus, for Schelling, the subject can be said to exist, but only in ek-sistence. The subject can thus be described with predicates, but these predicates do not describe an eternal essence of the subject. The character that we exhibit exists in a relationship of implication and explication with the self that one is. As we saw in the previous chapters, Schelling is not an emanationist. Contrary to emanation, where God shoots himself down the earth and the material form encountered there plays out the divine on a material level which is necessarily distinct from the divine, Schelling’s understanding of the relationship between subject and predicate in human life, which is a replication of the same structure of predication in the life of the absolute, is quite similar to Spinoza’s thought of expression. As Gilles Deleuze explains, Spinoza’s thought of expression means, “it is now object that expresses itself, the thing itself that explicates itself” (Deleuze, 1990: 22). That is to say, there is no difference, at least in one sense, between the explication of Substance in attribute and mode and Substance *qua* Substance. Substance *is* nothing outside of its explicating itself in attribute and mode, and the implication of attribute and mode within it. There are no parts without a whole to which they belong and in which they are implicated, but there is also no whole without that whole’s being expressed, or unfolded, through its parts.

Returning to Aristotle's language, we would say that the manner in which my active condition shows itself in my tarrying with any particular ethical situation explicates my character, but simultaneously reinforces and perpetuates that character. If I have an enveloped, or implicit, character it is one that can only be described in how it unfolds, in fact it is nothing more than the constancy of its unfolding. On the face of it, this may seem to be a radically unsatisfactory account of character, as it would seem to mean that we could not describe a person when they were not acting, i.e., when they were not exposing themselves. If that were in fact the case, I would completely agree. However, given the primacy of relation—I am what I am only insofar as I am always relating, even when I enter into solitude, I define myself by cutting myself off—it is fair to say that for Schelling we are never *not* acting, we are never *not* productive, and we are never not *ek-sistent*. This would then vindicate a reading of Schelling wherein what is really being described when we use the terms good and evil is exactly a bearing, a comportment, or an *ethos* that is, and is exhibited, only insofar as I am acting—which is something that I am always doing, and tend to do with some consistency due to the inertia of human life. Accordingly, the agent or actor that Schelling would describe as having either a good or evil character would be a subject of an entirely different kind than that which Nietzsche calls the man of *ressentiment*.

It would seem, then, that the people who exhibit comportments that Schelling would describe as evil are, ironically, extraordinarily similar to the way in which the man of *ressentiment* understands the world. As I explained in the previous section, evil, for Schelling, would amount to taking oneself as the subject *qua* lawgiver, and I also gave examples of how this conception of self leads to a prioritizing of self-preservation, in which the self is treated as an isolated monad. As Wirth explains, “when Nietzsche exposes the tacit commitments

of the bifurcation of the world into good and evil, he flushed out the needy, identity-demanding human soul,” and it is precisely this identity-demanding human—so long as the identity demanded is autonomous—that I have argued Schelling characterizes as evil (Wirth, 2003: 179). If this is true, then it may hold that the Schellingian philosopher is much closer to Nietzsche than we may have thought. However, before we could make such an assertion, we must return to the second question posed earlier: is Schelling’s conception of evil fundamentally reactive? In other words, does the opposition between good and evil emerge as a way for someone to gain some control over his or her life by identifying themselves as other than what pushes on them, threateningly, from the outside? Given my account of how identity works in Schelling, it would seem that the short answer would have to be a categorical, ‘no!’: only a person who exhibited such a self-conception would be described as evil for Schelling. This would imply that the measure of good and evil would be prior to and beyond simple, human moralizing. Thus we must investigate what the measure for good and evil is for Schelling and in order to find that measure we must return to Schelling’s account of philosophizing insofar as he opposes philosophizing to the possession of knowledge. Only when we have a sense of the purpose of such philosophizing for Schelling can we truly get a handle on what the measure of good and evil is for him.

Section IV **The Experience of Freedom as the Great Health**

In this final, full section of the final chapter of this project I must return to the question that I posed at the beginning of the previous section, but in slightly different form: why does Schelling bother to diagnose evil? I believe that if we can answer that question, we will be able to understand what the measure of good and evil are for Schelling. The title of

this section should, in large part, give way my answer: as Lawrence has it, “from beginning to end, Schelling’s one thought remains that of *freedom*” (Lawrence, 2004: 174), or as I have been putting it for numerous chapters, the objective, the purpose, the goal of philosophizing for Schelling and Heidegger is the experience of freedom. The novelty of this final section is that I will show that this experience of freedom is concomitant with the experience of health and activity

Prior to giving this account of health, we must answer the question of measure for Schelling. As we have seen, he does not think that the task of philosophy is to offer ‘correct’ accounts of what unfolds, even though it may seem that way. Let me be more precise about this point: Schelling *is* clearly concerned with the truth or falsity, from the perspective of correspondence, as these show up in philosophical labors, otherwise he would have no reason to spend so much time differentiating between the dead, isolated, knowledge that is borne out of the comportment of a thinker who takes themselves to be a lawgiver and the free thinking of one who maintains a phenomenological stance towards the unfolding of the world. The account of evil I have given in this chapter would be largely moot if he did not care about this distinction. However, if his philosophical endeavor could be characterized as guided by a will to truth at all costs, it would make very little sense for him to describe the philosophical activity of the man of *ressentiment* as evil. It would make a lot more sense for him to simply say that such a philosopher generates falsehoods, and leave it at that. Yet he describes these falsehoods, these errors, as monstrous. Why?

The easiest way for us to understand why Schelling thinks that these errors are monstrous, that they are evil, is to address another robust philosophical—specifically epistemic—concern about the process of philosophizing I have described for the last four

chapters. If we follow Heidegger and Schelling in their insistence that philosophizing amounts to letting beings be, i.e., it amounts to carrying oneself with a phenomenological *ethos*, could we ever move past that initial step of letting beings presence without simultaneously betraying the *ethos* that guided our initial engagement with entities? Does privileging *Gelassenheit* bring us to an *aporia* wherein we must either engage in the willful errancy of the center, tinkering and tarrying with an entity on our own terms after the initial disclosure, or, stay in this stance of releasement thereby making ourselves incapable of saying anything about the entity that we are encountering?

If Schelling and Heidegger's demand for a phenomenological *ethos* were, in fact, a demand for detached, objective, empirical observation in which the observer's task were to keep themselves at a distance from what they were engaging so as to collect information about how the entity was in itself, this *aporia* would clearly emerge. However, in order to understand my activity as a philosopher, or a scientist, in such terms would necessitate that I thought I was a distinct, discrete, individualized monad—a subject encountering objects that had a life of their own outside of my participation with them. Such a manner of engaging the presencing of entities would also, presumably, amount to what Schelling calls a “*wanting to know*” in which the observer did not attend to the conceptual expectations that they were bringing to bear on what they were encountering; this is precisely what Schelling has in mind when he calls all experimentation a form of prophesizing. If I have already decided that in my investigation of an eco-system, I want to see how the animal with the particular cellular structure and genetic make-up that I call ‘thrush’ interacts with the plant with the particular cellular structure and genetic make-up that I call ‘jack pine’, I have settled most of the big ontological questions in advance that attending phenomenologically to an environment is

supposed to help us answer. I have already decided what a thrush is, and I group this particular entity under a universal category that arguably determines what I will and will not see in the behavior of this animal; and the same could clearly be said of the jack pine.

This approach to entities—an approach that holds entities to be identifiable, essentially, in isolation from one another, and that holds that I, as an observer, do not participate in the disclosure of an entity—is described quite clearly by Merleau-Ponty:

Science manipulates things and gives up living in them. It makes its own limited models of things; operating upon these indices or variables to effect whatever transformation are permitted by their definition, it comes face to face with the real world only at rare intervals. Science is and always has been that admirably active, ingenious, and bold way of thinking whose fundamental bias is to treat everything as though it were an object-in-general—as though it meant nothing to us and yet was predestined for our own use. (Merleau-Ponty, 1964: 159)

It is this view of knowledge that would lead us hopelessly in the *aporia* described above, but it is a view that is entirely foreign to Schelling and Heidegger. As has been repeated throughout this project, for Schelling and Heidegger the essence of any particular thing *is what it is only insofar as it relates to what it is not*. If this is the case, and the identity—insofar as this is understood as something that one seeks in epistemic inquiry—of a particular bird is sought, the only way in which to come to know ‘what’ this bird is is to understand the web of relations in which it participates in a particular place at a particular time. In other words, to know the bird means to know the ‘personality’ of the bird insofar as it plays a part in a structure that is larger than the body of the bird itself. This then necessitates that one has an understanding of the causal nexus that the bird participates in to make the web of relations to which it belongs behave the way it does. Knowing the particular bird then would mean knowing what the bird eats, where it builds its nest, what its different songs can tell us about this particular place. But these things are only knowable insofar as we have an

understanding of the whole in which the bird participates. Here then, the universal—or the genus for example—is eschewed in lieu of knowledge of the network that this bird sustains and that, in turn, sustains the bird.⁴⁰ This amounts to a breakdown of the distinction between the “what” and the “that” of the bird, as the *fact* of the bird will be synonymous with its whatness. Merleau-Ponty can again be helpful as, in the working notes to *The Visible and the Invisible*, he notes his enthusiasm in light of his “discovery of the (verbal) *Wesen*: first expression of the being that is neither being-object nor being-subject, neither essence nor existence: what *wes* (the being-rose of the rose, the being-society of society, the being-history of history) answers to the question *was* as well as the question *daß*” (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 174).

What cannot be missed here is that for Heidegger, Schelling, and, presumably, Merleau-Ponty as well, we cannot neglect the role that *we* play as philosophers in attending thoughtfully to this movement of an entity, this is the mistake that the critique given above makes. Rather, for all of these thinkers, *Gelassenheit*, releasement, amounts to releasing oneself into the world of which one is part and parcel. Releasement would then amount to another way to think about the question of self-knowledge. Releasement is not a release *from* the structures of conceptuality that would overdetermine my engagement with the world—this would merely be an inverted form of the narcissism of monologue as described

⁴⁰ There are extraordinary similarities between this account and what one finds Vine Deloria, Jr. advocating for throughout his writings. In fact, I am cribbing much of this account from his writings. Deloria is not alone amongst contemporary indigenous philosophers in presenting an account that accords with my presentation of Schelling and Heidegger (and potentially a particular kind of phenomenology as such). V.F. Cordova explains that while the Euro-American attempts to understand the world through universals that thereby enable humans to control and dominate the world, “the Native American... understands the world as a more complex place. There can be no universals in the face of an infinity of complexity” (Cordova, 2007: 70). Greg Cajete refers to the “self-organization or ‘creativity’ out of the field of chaos [that] occurs everywhere in nature,” thus problematizing any attempt to identify any element of what Cordova calls a matrix—or what Adorno would call a constellation—in isolation from that matrix (Cajete, 2004: 49). Thus are just two of a number of examples I could give.

above, where the world goes on a diatribe and I passively receive—rather it is a releasement *to* the world that ought to exhibit itself as a dialogue with the presencing of whatsoever is encountered. I can simultaneously maintain a stance, a comportment, of *Gelassenheit* and tarry discursively with an entity so long as that tarrying *is actually discursive*, i.e., it must remain dialogical, a give and take, between the entity and myself. As Heidegger’s tri-partite structure of phenomenology should have made clear, I must attend to the self-showing of an entity while attending to what I am bringing to bear on that entity in my engagement with it, but even in this engagement, I must be directed by some end, some larger objective. What this objective is will be addressed momentarily.

First, let us continue exploring this claim about interaction: John McCumber describes Heidegger’s understanding of what makes an entity, an eco-system, a state, or even a human what it is as “diakenic unification,” which he explains, has three characteristics: no part can be understand apart from the others, no part “is the ground of the others, i.e., explains them,” and finally, “no yet more basic phenomenon can ground, i.e., explain, all of them together” (McCumber, 2000: 14). In this text, and others, McCumber wants to give an account of what makes an entity what it is that does not return to what he calls “ousiodic structures,” which is another term he uses to describe the way an entity is understood to be constituted in onto-theology and modern science. As opposed to having a solid center, things for Heidegger, McCumber writes, can be “captured in another way, in terms of what I call the *diakena*, the gaps which grow and gather” (McCumber, 1999: 207). Thus for McCumber, any entity is what it is only insofar as the parts that make it up interact with one another in a manner that is both playful and unstable. Though he chooses to emphasize how this is a way that a particular thing is constituted and does not attend nearly as much to

how it could be used to describe a referential totality—which is a forgivable offense as all entities are themselves referential totalities—we can employ his account to help us understand how the activity of engaging any entity must by necessity alter it, even the activity of letting that entity be.

Coming into relation with something changes us, and since we, as ecstatic, are perpetually in relation, we are perpetually being altered and transformed and altering and transforming the world that we are encountering. Awareness of this fact—a *was* that is coincident with its *daß*—amounts to the self-knowledge that is exhibited in maintaining a stance of *Gelassenheit*, or by debasing oneself into a partner in dialogue with the world. This is why it is appropriate to say that both Heidegger and Schelling are making a demand about how we *ought* to engage the presencing of things that is derived from an *is*; and thus, again, it is correct to say that Heidegger and Schelling are concerned with offering a ‘true’ account of the basic constitution of things, so that we can attempt to accord ourselves with this fact. However, a careful reader would take pause at this juncture: if the account that I have just given of ‘diakenic unification’ is true, would it not be the case that I could never have access to how things *are* as such, as any attending generates alterations, so as to establish whether or not I accord with them?

My answer to this question is, as strange as it may sound, an emphatic, ‘Yes!’ Both Heidegger and Schelling’s philosophical undertakings lead us to recognize that all of our engagements with the world are fundamentally creative, even the account of why this creativity, underdetermination, and playfulness lies at the basis of all things. The recognition of the abyssal bursting of sense that defines all things is, I believe, a recognition that is only attained insofar as one broaches the task of thinking with an *ethos* of openness, of possibility,

and of freedom. Openness discloses openness, possibility discloses possibility, and freedom discloses freedom. This is why Lawrence insists, “Schelling anticipates Nietzsche in providing an aesthetic rather than a moral justification of existence” (Lawrence, 2004: 176).

So again, why evil? Or to ask the same question of Heidegger, why does “the essence of evil not consist in the mere badness of human acts, but rather rests in the maliciousness of ferocity [*im Bösertigen des Grimmes*]”? Evil lies in closure, in the nihilation of the generosity of being in all of its playful arbitrariness, because both Schelling and Heidegger hold openness and creativity in the face of the lack of ground to be the great health, the entrance into “the realm of the upsurge of healing” (GA9, 359). Insofar as the self as such exists only as it is ek-sistent, that is, insofar as it is ecstatic, the health of my self is the health of the whole and vice versa. Commenting on a passage that was discussed in Chapter I, wherein we saw Jean-Luc Marion distinguish between Heidegger and Husserl on the “wonder of all wonders,” Thomas Sheehan explains that *Anwesenung*, “the process whereby entities become humanly engageable...does not happen in entities themselves apart from human beings, nor is it superveniently ordained from beyond the human world. Rather it occurs only with human beings and in the midst of their world.” (Sheehan, 2002: 285). Sheehan refers to this event as the reciprocal determination that I have previously described as *Ereignis*. Yet his account, in this essay at least, seems to privilege to firmly the human portion of this relationship in a manner that makes it sound as though Heidegger had little or no concern for the manner in which human beings disclosed the world. Sheehan provocatively argues that Heidegger had no concern for the character of technology, reading Heidegger’s proclamation to let beings be, by saying, “the proper way to let entities *be* is to them *be present*, that is, to let them be endlessly engageable” (Sheehan, 2002: 286). While I

agree with Sheehan, who is a powerful reader of Heidegger, that we let beings be precisely be engaging them—I think it is clear, if no where other than in his tone, that Heidegger thinks that certain manners of engagement are significantly more problematic than others.

Otherwise, I have no idea why he would bother to refer to the procession of technology as a danger; a danger in which the saving power lies.

Contra Sheehan, I contend that a comportment is evil insofar as it poisons the whole, thereby not only closing off the possibility of experiencing freedom at the limits of conceptuality, but also killing oneself to live. Self-preservation as preservation of the whole is thus *a* goal of thinking for Schelling and Heidegger, but it is always subsidiary to the continued possibility of the experience of freedom. Schelling's measure for evil is thus not reactive, rather, evil itself is a sickly, egotistical reaction in the face of the overflow of activity that is the unfolding of the absolute, and unfolding in which we are implicit and which we explicate through our lives. Schelling and Heidegger's experience of freedom is thus entirely consonant with Spinoza's *amor intellectualis dei*, insofar as this love for Spinoza is an experience of the unfinished and unfinishable joy that is the task of thinking, insofar as thinking remains a thinking of relation and expression (E5p36). The desire for life, for joy, for possibility, for the experience of freedom that is ecstatic thinking, is thus the only measure that can be found by which Schelling and Heidegger could, at the end of the day, adjudicate between good and evil.

This account, which holds the pursuit of the experience of freedom to be the alpha and omega of thinking for Schelling and Heidegger, surely rings of an extreme valuation of being, something with which Heidegger was indubitably uncomfortable, to say the least. Heidegger is quite clear that he views Nietzsche's project of the revaluation of all values to

be the task of a particular model of subjectivity, a model of subjectivity that is able to, and ought to, determine “the essence of all living things” (GA5, 226). This need to determine the meaning, the value of all life, emerges precisely because the nihilism that follows from the collapse of the supersensory leaves us incapable of answering the question, “why?” However, for Heidegger, this question “fails insofar as it is a questioning after the existent ground of beings, and thus fails to ask about being itself and its truth. The question has, *as a question*—and not only because it lacks an answer—failed” (GA6.2, 339). To ask why, from a simply human, subjective, perspective is already to say too much, it is to have decided in advance about the truth of being, not leaving this question open as a question. Rather, it is to instantiate a rigid distinction between subject and object, which is the basis of all willing as self-willing, i.e., autonomous willing (GA6.2, 342). As Heidegger says in the final sentence of his *Nietzsche's Word: "God is Dead"*, “Thinking only begins when we experience that reason [*Vernunft*], which has reigned for centuries is the most stubborn countermatter of thinking” (GA5, 267).

Contrary to this self-assertive valuation of all beings in their objectification, Heidegger advocates for a stance of questioning, which means that thinking is “holding open the question of being” such that “any discussion of ‘being itself’ remains a questioning” (GA6.2, 304). For Heidegger, any thinking that abides in valuation cannot maintain such a questioning stance, as all attempts to appraise [*schätzen*] life are ways in which we “constitute and establish value” (GA5, 237). Heidegger’s project would then, seem to be, an attempt to get beyond either actively constructing, or passively receiving values, so as to hold questioning open. The life of the thinker, the *goal* of the thinker, is thus to maintain an openness, a questioning stance towards being, never simply taking over meanings nor simply

projecting them, but tarrying with being as “what is given to be thought” (GA6.2, 336), as always being given anew at all moments.

Given the work done in throughout this project, it ought to be clear that I agree with Heidegger’s concerns regarding a mode of anthropomorphic valuation that maintains a distinction between subject and object wherein an individual understands themselves as the lawgiver of being. Yet, I worry that his uptake of Nietzsche falls into similar traps as his reading of Schelling. Both Nietzsche and Heidegger are emphatic that reason [*Vernunft*] is a trap, an adversary, a prejudice for philosophy that disables a thinkers ability to engage the happening of things, insofar as this happening, when attended to phenomenologically, effaces our ability to attach a subject to the happening. Heidegger’s critique of Nietzsche hinges upon his assumption that, for Nietzsche (and we should recall, for Schelling as well), all values are values generated by a willful subject. This assumption would overlook Nietzsche’s constant rejection of attributing all deeds to doers. What if we were to say ‘value happens’; we encounter being, even in openness, as already valued and we, as thinkers, creatively tarry with this value in all of our engagements? Heidegger may not be comfortable with this, but this is where I would like to conclude; Merleau-Ponty famously writes, “because we are in the world, we are *condemned to meaning*” (Merleau-Ponty, 2006: xxii), which means as much as to say we are condemned to value, but not necessarily values we choose or generate autonomously or monologically. The dialogical, ecstatic movement of philosophy is the creative inquiry into, and (re)generation of meaning beyond any such monological pronouncements of the subject.

A brief excursus in Nancy’s *Being Singular Plural*—to take Nancy both as the provocation for, and closure of, this project—will serve to illuminate this point more fully.

In this work, Nancy spends a significant portion of time parsing out the distinction between production and creation—a theme he returns to with some frequency in many other works, notably in *Globalization, Or: the Creation of the World*. Whereas the act of production, as Nancy sees it, requires a distinction between the producer, the product, and what is worked upon, all creation is fundamentally creation *ex nihilo*, and without a creator that precedes and produces out of this nothing (Nancy, 2000: 16). Yet this *nihilo* is precisely the lack of an origin outside of the “paradoxical ‘first-person plural’ which makes sense of the world as the spacing and intertwining of so many worlds” (Nancy, 2000: 5). This origin is “not an end, End, like Principle, is a form of the Other ... It is the plural singularity of the Being of being” (Nancy, 2000: 13). This plural singularity that is being means that any singularity gains its identity through its exposure, through differing and deferral, into the world that is both constituted by and constitutes every singularity as such. Regarding this, Nancy writes:

If ‘creation’ is indeed this singular ex-position of being, then its real name is *existence*. Existence is creation, *our* creation; it is the beginning and end that *we* are. This is the thought that is the most necessary for us to think. If we do not succeed in thinking it, then we will never gain access to who we are, we who are no more than us in a world, which is itself no more than the world—but we who have reached this point precisely because we have thought *logos* (the self-presentation of presence) as creation (as singular coming). (Nancy, 2000: 17)

But maintaining this opening, not falling into the hatred of existence that Nancy elsewhere characterizes as evil, is, I have argued, our challenge. This constant, open, dialogical generation of meaning that is transformed and transforms us in our thinking is something that I find in Schelling, Nietzsche, Nancy and clearly in Heidegger as well, though Heidegger himself may never have clearly said as much due to his concerns regarding valuation. Maybe we could say that asking the question ‘why?’ in light of our awareness and solicitation of the abyssal character of being is precisely such process that does not and could not lapse into the

closure of evil, error, *ressentiment*, and onto-theology; rather it is a maintenance of possibility, which is only possible through the pursuit of the question worthy, the experience of which is the experience of freedom.

APPENDIX

CITATIONS AND TRANSLATIONS

The majority of the citations in this dissertation are made in accordance with the Chicago Manual of Style, though there are a few notable exceptions. All of my citations of Schelling (with the exception of texts that have not made the collected works yet) are made according to the pagination of his collected works in German. All of my citations from Heidegger, insofar as possible, are made according to the number and page of the *Gesamtausgabe* edition in question. Below, I list the *Gesamtausgabe* editions that I cite, ordered by number with the German title. In the bibliography these texts are listed by date of publication.

- GA 4: *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*
- GA 5: *Holzwege*
- GA 6.2: *Nietzsche, Zweiter Band*
- GA 7: *Vorträge und Aufsätze*
- GA 8: *Was Heisst Denken?*
- GA 9: *Wegmarken*
- GA 10: *Der Satz vom Grund.*
- GA 12: *Unterwegs zur Sprache*
- GA 15: *Seminare*
- GA 19: *Platon: Sophistes*
- GA 20: *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*
- GA 24: *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*
- GA 29: *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik: Welt-Endlichkeit-Einsamkeit*
- GA 45: *Grundfragen der Philosophie: Ausgewählte "Probleme" der "Logik"*
- GA 65: *Beiträge zur Philosophie (vom Ereignis)*
- GA 69: *Die Geschichte des Seyns*
- GA 70: *Über den Anfang*

I have also followed standard citation conventions regarding references to Stephanus numbers in Greek texts, to book, proposition, demonstration, etc. in Spinoza's *Ethics*, and to references to the original German pagination of the A and B edition of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Hegel is cited according the Suhrkamp edition *Werke*; Nietzsche according to the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*.

It should also be noted that almost without exception all of the references to material that are originally in German are my own translations—though this was a laborious task, it was done for the sake of consistency and I think it has paid off. I owe a great debt to Peter Warnek, Jeffrey Librett, Jason Wirth, and Nick Reynolds for their repeated translation assistance throughout the course of this process.

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