

'World' in Middle Schelling: Why Nature Transcendentalises

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What is the function of the distinction between ground and existence, which 'the naturephilosophy of our time first established in science'?¹ And what does it tell us concerning that distinction that it issues from the *Naturphilosophie*, rather than from the 'logic' Schelling is supposed never to have written? If seeking the 'function' of this distinction seems dissonant with the worldly character of Schelling's investigations, it is part of the richness of that work that, for example, nevertheless essence (*Wesen*) is 'functionally' determined as having 'two operative modes (*zwei Wirkungsweisen*)',² while ground is similarly functionally capable of 'self-operating (*für-sich-wirken des Grundes*)'.³

It is thus clear that Schelling understands essence as consisting in operations. Yet an essence is not simple but complex, combining 'two modes of operation (*zwei Wirkungsweisen*)'.⁴ It is into these two modes that the distinction divides essential operations: once and if one obtains, ground is a self-operating, centrifugal vortex, against which existence is the centripetal distribution of structures. Essences, therefore, neither serve on Schelling's view to *identify* entities or kinds, nor to ground *necessitation relations* amongst entities or kinds.⁵ Essence is entity-smearing, both forwards and backwards. Schelling holds that essence smears forwards because it bears the consequentialist weight Fine, for instance, contemporarily accords 'essence':

if a given property is essential, then so is the property of having that property; and hence an interest in the given 'lower level' property will transfer to an interest in the derived 'higher level' property.⁶

¹ F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit und die damit zusammenhängende Gegenstände*, hereafter *Freiheitsschrift*. All references to Schelling's works are to *Schellings Werke*, ed. K.F.A. Schelling, Stuttgart and Augsburg: Cotta, 1856-61, referenced by division and volume (I/1-10, II/1-4), followed by page number. For the *Freiheitsschrift*, I use James Gutmann's translation (Chicago: Open Court, 1986), hereafter PI. Here SW I/7: 357; PI 31.

² *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7: 409; PI 90

³ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7: 381; PI 58

⁴ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 409; PI 90

⁵ George Molnar presents both claims in his contribution to contemporary 'neo-essentialist' philosophy of nature, *Powers. A Study in Metaphysics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, 38-9: 'The grounding of essence in identity explains the difference between essential properties and necessary properties: the inessential properties of an object are not merely its accidental ones, but include all those it has necessarily yet not by virtue of what it is.' Neo-essentialists argue that a property is essential, however, when it consists of a causal power that is, as Stephen Mumford points out, 'a source of such [*de re*] necessity' as the world contains. See his 'Kinds, Essence, Powers' in Alice Drewery, ed., *Metaphysics in Science*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006, 47-62, here 49.

⁶ Kit Fine, 'Essence and modality', in *Philosophical Perspectives* 8 (1994): 1-16; here 1. For a discussion of Fine's distinction between 'constitutive' and 'consequentialist' essence, see Kathrin Koslicki, 'Varieties of ontological dependence', in Fabrice Correia and Benjamin Schnieder, eds. *Metaphysical Grounding. Understanding the Structure of Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, 186-213, along with Fine's 'Guide to ground', *ibid.*, 37-80.

That is to say, a property's essentiality obtains once having it obtains. Yet in what is it that a property obtains? Notably, in Fine's formulation, properties attach not to objects but to essentiality, where essentiality generates derivative orders of essentiality. For this same reason, however, essence 'smears' insuperably backwards: since no object or thing individually grounds or backstops essence, the latter's ground-seeking function is required to descend to a depth augmented with each augmentation of the consequent or derivative series. Accordingly, when ground exists, not only does it do so consequentially. Neither does an existing ground terminate the grounding procedure, but merely places an additional stratum, a 'resistant' or *Gegenstand*, in its way. It is from this that the conclusion may be drawn that, since essence exceeds existence 'descendentally'⁷ just as insuperably consequent existence makes its antecedent into the base for its ascent, that 'the essence of ground, or of the existent, can only be precedent to all ground, that is, the absolute considered as such, the unground.'⁸

On this account, essence is neither the substrate of its properties nor the sum of its appearances, but is rather an operation by which existents are smeared towards a past that is without them (grounding) and a future in which they are not (assuming only that something arises). It is because the operations of ground and existence are *nonfinal*, both insofar as operations are not determined by having a futural target state, but rather essence itself divides operationally; and insofar as no operation is exhausted in its outcome, that an ontology for which existents are local constituents entails 'non-objectal', nonfinal or the enviroing of all strata – 'the absolute considered as such'.

Consequently, amongst the 'resistants' (thus removing the 'thingish' prejudice inherent in translating *Gegenstände* as 'objects', which Schelling criticises⁹) on which this ontological sequence co-dependes (*zusammenhängt*), are the aesthetic¹⁰ geneses comprising 'fact' and 'feeling', the ontological sequencing chain 'antecedent' and 'consequent', the emergence chain 'dependency' (*Abhängigkeit*) and 'autonomy' (*Selbständigkeit*) and the generation of orders or *Stufenfolge*¹¹ that positions the 'later' within the 'earlier' 'revelations of nature'.¹² In this sense, the dividing of ground from existence is expressed ontologically as the *enviroing of existence*, without prejudice as to the manner or mode of existence (e.g., logical, physical, mythological, revelatory, and so forth), and such that the investigation of freedom is insuperably bonded not to existence as a

⁷ In Book One, Part One of the *Philosophie der Offenbarung* (hereafter *Begründung*), SW II/3, 151n, tr. Bruce Matthews, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy. The Berlin Lectures* (hereafter GP). Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007, 196n, Schelling divides negative from positive philosophy insofar as the former 'is only a *philosophia ascendens* (ascending from below), from which one immediately realizes that it can have only a logical significance, whereas positive philosophy is a *philosophia descendens* (descending from above).'

⁸ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 407-8, PI 88-9, t.m.

⁹ *Freiheitsschrift*, SW I/7, 349; PI 22, t.m.: "The error of his [Spinoza's – IHG] system is by no means due to the fact that he posits all *things in God*, but to the fact that they are *things* – to the abstract conception of worldly essences [*Weltwesen*]." See also *Grundlegung der positiven Philosophie*, ed. Horst Fuhrmans (Turin: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1972), 94: "Object [*Gegenstand*] and resistance [*Widerstand*] are at bottom one and the same word."

¹⁰ I take 'aesthetic' in the pre-Kantian sense to mean the science of perception, as it was used by Baumgarten, in *Metaphysics*, translated Courtney D. Fugate and John Hymers. London: Bloomsbury, 2013, e.g., §533: "The science of knowing and presenting <*proponendi*> with regard to the senses is AESTHETICS', a usage recently revived by Maurizio Ferraris. See his *Introduction to New Realism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

¹¹ Primarily associated with the naturephilosophy, *Stufenfolge* recurs in the middle works, e.g. in *The Ages of the World* (hereafter AW), SW I/8, 232, 324; AW 22, 93, both of which concern nature in general, in the first instance, and organic beings in the second, and then again at SW I/8, 333; AW 100, where one obtains linking creating, forming and making. Schelling continues its use in the 1830s (SW I/10, 241) through to the 1840s and '50s (SW I/10, 311, 330, 364-5, 382; SW II/1 76, 411, 492, 529; SW II/2 451).

¹² *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 415; PI 98: "We have an earlier revelation than any written one – nature."

whole – since if there is existence, it can only be if environed – but to what he calls 'the innermost centre of nature'.¹³ What this centre might be, or how this centre arises, what *occupies* it, was the animating question of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century life sciences, on the one hand, and a continuation, therefore, of the investigation concerning the origin of motion, the *arche kineseos*, Schelling began in *On the World Soul*, on the other.¹⁴ But it is also the basal problem of fundamentality or the 'essence of grounds'. Schelling's answer, we may extrapolate, would position the ontological co-dependency of ground and existent as itself consequent on an insuperably ungrounded state antecedent to those operations. This illustrates the environing or field ontology operative even in the *Freiheitsschrift*'s title, which positions its focus – the essence of human freedom – within series of resistants, including creation and primal being, each of which, if the thesis holds, is environed in turn. The present essay seeks to outline the ontology of environed operations developed in the *Freiheitsschrift*. Roughly, no operation, not even *Urseyn*, is so primitive as not to be environed, such that no operation may satisfy the context from which operations issue. It is for the (non-fundamental) reason that there are operations at all that there is no 'environment of all environments'.¹⁵

1. The Positive is the Whole

Why then, it might be asked, does 'the whole' enjoy a positive valency in the *Freiheitsschrift*? The work's title makes it clear that the work first addresses what resists or informs the environment of a free, that is, an autonomous (*selbständiger*) operation. Only then do inquiries proceed into what the essence of a free act must be. Since an inquiry is philosophical, we are told, just when it relates a concept to a 'systematic worldview' or to 'the world as a whole',¹⁶ we must either conclude that the whole is incomplete or that it is itself environed, i.e., that the world as a whole issues from an environment it does not include. If nothing that is can be exempted from what Schelling here calls 'the world', such a world must be susceptible to augmentation by whatever it is that is. This is why 'world', as Schelling indicates in the *Weltalter* drafts, is neither the physical cosmos nor the transcendental ideal, but a copula.¹⁷ Order is insuperably environed by ataxia, the 'disorder of the forces'.¹⁸

Yet the work is more usually taken as the pinion of a Schellingian *Wende*¹⁹ between the early and late periods, a turning towards an existentialist²⁰ or a dialectical materialist²¹ rejection of

¹³ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 362; 37

¹⁴ *Von der Weltseele* SW I/2: 345-584, tr. I. H. Grant in *Of the World Soul and Other Naturephilosophical Writings*. Forthcoming: Albany: SUNY, 2015.

¹⁵ Jakob von Uexküll, *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans*, tr. Joseph D. O'Neill. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010, 135: '... all these different environments are fostered and borne along by the One that is inaccessible to all environments forever. Forever unknowable behind all the worlds it produces, the subject – Nature – conceals itself.'

¹⁶ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 336-7; PI 7-8

¹⁷ F. W. J. Schelling, *Die Weltalter. Fragmente. Urfassungen von 1811 und 1813*, ed. Manfred Schröter. Munich: Beck, 1946, 225.

¹⁸ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 370; PI 46; cf. *Philosophie der Offenbarung* II/4, 180-181, where generation entails participation in and resistance to "worldly ataxia".

¹⁹ Xavier Tilliette, *Une philosophie en devenir* (2nd edition, II vols, Paris: Vrin, 1992, I: 504-5) presents Fuhrmans' claim, in *Schellings Philosophie der Weltalter* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1954, 75-127), that a Böhme-influenced *Wende* occurs in the *Weltalterphilosophie* after 1806. Fuhrmans notes its persistence in, e.g., Habermas' discussion of a Schellingian *Kehre* in his 1963 essay 'Dialektischer Idealismus im Übergang zum Materialismus', in *Theorie und Praxis*

the intervening decade's *Naturphilosophie*, a rejection evidenced by the conspicuous elision of the naturephilosophical works in the volume crowned by the *Freiheitsschrift* and booted by *Vom Ich*. This interpretive strategy would reduce the problems of essence, nature and causation either to symptoms protesting against, even as they attest to, Schelling's own 'inner mutation'²² or to a metaphysic of freedom and 'positions of the will'.²³

The re-emergence of the problem of freedom in 1809 gives us no reason to assume such a turning unless freedom is alien to nature,²⁴ separable from the world as a whole. Yet because a philosophy of freedom can 'only be developed from the fundamental principles of a true naturephilosophy',²⁵ and is 'complete' only when it demonstrates 'how each *successive process* more closely approaches the essence of nature, until... the innermost centre is disclosed'. What is this disclosure, this revelation? Schelling simply asserts that its disclosure will be consequent upon the 'highest division of forces',²⁶ a division issuing from and in essence, though essence has irreducibly two '*Wirkungsweisen*'.²⁷ That essence is self-dividing is acknowledged at the outset of the work. The philosophy of nature develops because this identity is not the extensional identity of the two ($x=x$), but what each differentially is (the identity in x is the identity in y , and since identity cannot differ from itself, the identity between x and y is at once its third iteration and, therefore, the additional assertion of the identity in each of these three). Hence the 'antithesis in the pure identity of nature' from which Schelling has the construction of nature issue in 1799²⁸ remains insuperable in the *Freedom* essay. Moreover, as the 'nature that permeates everything',²⁹ identity is maximally ubiquitous³⁰ and therefore not identical to any emergent.³¹

The renegotiation of an *a posteriori* naturalism with the *apparent* apriority of essence remains an unfamiliar element of the *Freiheitsschrift*. Yet such an understanding of essence is falsely attributed to Schelling, apriority itself being consequent upon the activity of essence since

(Berlin: Luchterhand, 1969, 108-161). Sean McGrath's 'Introduction' to *The Dark Ground of Spirit* (New York: Routledge, 2012) offers a concise account of the various positions taken on this issue and the reasons for them.

²⁰ Karl Jaspers, *Schelling: Größe und Verhängnis* (Munich: Piper, 1955).

²¹ Habermas, *op. cit.*

²² Tilliette 1992 I: 510. Sean McGrath, in *The Dark Ground of Spirit*. New York and London: Routledge, 2012, 29, criticises Žižek's attempt, in *The Irreducible Remainder*. London: Verso, 1996, not only to provide a psychoanalytic reading of his works, but 'more accurately, a psychoanalysis of Schelling'.

²³ Martin Heidegger, *Schellings Abhandlung über das Wesen der Menschlichen Freiheit*, Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1971, 133.

²⁴ Such textual support as exists for it consists in two claims at SW I/7, 333-4; PI 3-4. (1) That all his previous work is declared to have been naturephilosophy. This claim implies but does not entail that the *Freiheitsschrift* is itself not such a work. (2) That it is the first work wherein 'the author offers... his conception of... [the] philosophy... of the Ideal' is required by misattributions of claims concerning the ideal part of philosophy to the naturephilosophy. In other words, it is to the completed system of philosophy, of which his previous works are 'fragments', that the *Freiheitsschrift* is devoted and that requires the 'overcoming of many a prejudice' (SW I/7, 335, PI 5), rather than to some philosophically partisan turning from nature to freedom. I agree with McGrath, *op. cit.*, 33, when he notes that the *Freiheitsschrift* announces 'no axial divergence' from the naturephilosophical concerns still dominant in the Identity philosophy.

²⁵ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 357; PI 31

²⁶ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 362; PI 37

²⁷ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 409; PI 90

²⁸ *Einleitung zu dem Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie oder über den Begriff der spekulativen Physik*, SW I/3, 308n; tr. Keith R. Peterson in *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*. Albany: SUNY, 2004: 219n.

²⁹ *Begründung* SW II/3, 6; GP, 92-3.

³⁰ *Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie*, SW I/4, 120, tr. Michael Vater and David W. Wood in *The Philosophical Rupture Between Fichte and Schelling. Selected Texts and Correspondance (1800-1802)*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012 (hereafter PR), 149: 'absolute identity has surely never ceased being identity and everything that *is*, is considered in itself – not just the appearance of absolute identity but *identity itself*'.

³¹ *Darstellung* SW I/4, 119; PR 148: 'With respect to being in itself, nothing has come into being.'

'anything the essence of which exceeds actuality is temporal'.³² It is only because essence exceeds or 'overpowers' actuality but remains nature, that a *past* emerges where the *a priori* is as 'having been', as a dimension of essence.³³ Unfamiliarity with the *Freiheitsschrift's* dynamics or powers-naturalism is itself therefore consequent upon any account of that project that withdraws freedom from nature, that is, separates it from the system with which it *con-sists*. Thus, although Schelling presents the *Freiheitsschrift* as his first 'completely definite' account of the philosophy of the Ideal,³⁴ suggesting an abstraction of a logical from a cosmological order in which the implicit withdrawal of freedom from nature would already be previsioned, even the understanding – undeniably Ideal – is introduced as having as 'the division of forces' as its 'first effect in nature'.³⁵ How the understanding can *have effects in nature* at all, how the word can be 'spoken out into it',³⁶ is the problem that drives the *Freiheitsschrift* to continue the investigation of the involution of cognitive in cosmological systems that forms the starting point of the 1810 *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*. Asking the apparently transcendental question of how a system is possible at all, Schelling offers the naturalistic response that 'long before man decided to create a system, there already existed one: the *System der Welt*'.³⁷ Calling this a transcendental naturalism does not go far enough, since if the conditions of possibility for systematising, whether cosmogonic or ideogenic, are nature, then nature transcendentalises. Schelling's naturalism is not reductive, that is, but inflationary just if nature consists in 'additional elements'. For free- as for nature-philosophy, a cognitive system may be Ideal for and in the understanding, but the understanding is consequent upon a cosmos (itself consequent or insuperably environed) wherein it arises.

If freedom is treated apart from the nexus it forms with *Gegenstände*, philosophical inquiries into a nature full of powers, into the theory of self-replicating operations, and into the origin and efficacy of the understanding are occluded beneath the self-justification of a philosophy of the Ideal premised on elimination: everything not in the understanding is without reality. The 'irreducible remainder'³⁸ makes this eliminative idealism impossible. Nature is restored to the *Freiheitsschrift* when attention is paid to the details of its revised theory of essence and form, central to the Identity philosophy. We are concerned therefore in what follows with the concepts or *functions* proper to essence and form in Schelling's middle philosophy.

2. Essence and Potency: the Law of the Ground

The essence [Wesen] of the I is freedom, that is, it is not thinkable except inasmuch as it posits itself by its own absolute power [aus absoluter Selbstmacht], not, indeed, as any kind of something, but as sheer I. This freedom can be determined positively, because we want to

³² Über das Verhältniß des Realen und Idealen in der Natur oder Entwicklung der ersten Grundsätze der Naturphilosophie an den Principien der Schwere und des Lichts (hereafter *Band*), SW I/2, 364.

³³ Schelling presents the origin of the past in the *Weltalter* (SW I/8, 259; AW 43): 'The person who does not overcome himself or herself has no past, or rather never comes out of the past and lives constantly in the past.'

³⁴ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 334; PI 4

³⁵ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 361; PI 36

³⁶ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 395; PI 74, t.m.

³⁷ *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen* SW I/7, 421 (hereafter *Privatvorlesungen*) tr. Thomas Pfau, in *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory. Three Essays by F. W. J. Schelling*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994, hereafter IE, 197

³⁸ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 360; PI 34

attribute freedom not to a thing in itself but to the pure I as posited by itself. . . . No objective freedom belongs to the I because it is not an object [*Objekt*] at all. As soon as we try to determine the I as an object, it withdraws into the most restricted sphere, under the conditions of the interdependence of objects – its freedom and independence disappear. An object is possible only through another object, and only inasmuch as it is bound to conditions. Freedom *is* only through itself and it encompasses [*umfaßt*] the infinite.³⁹

He who has reflected upon freedom and necessity has found for himself that these two principles must be *united* in the absolute: *freedom*, because the absolute acts from its own unconditioned power [*das Absolute aus unbedingter Selbstmacht. . . handelt*], and *necessity* because it acts only according to the laws of its own being, the inner necessity of its essence.⁴⁰

The inclusion of the two essays from which the above quotations are drawn, alongside the first publication of the *Freiheitsschrift* in the 1809 *Philosophische Schriften*, seems at first sight to support a *Wende* account pinioned on the rejection of the naturephilosophy. The degree of consonance between those works' concerns and those of the *Freiheitsschrift* is indeed striking: just as the *Freiheitsschrift* maps the system of essence according to which each has its being 'only in another' and 'none is without the other',⁴¹ *Vom Ich* conceives freedom as the degree of *Selbstmacht* proper to an essence, while essences are differentiated according to the degree to which their power or sphere of activity is *restricted* by another. With this, Schelling moves decisively from Fichte's universalisation of activity under the transcendental pinion of the I, insofar as no single state satisfies essence's operative modes. The contrasting of the 'inner necessity' by which an essence acts, with the conditioned 'interdependence' of objects, prompts the suggestion that the *Philosophische Briefe* amount to a first draft of the solution to the problem the *Freiheitsschrift* undertakes thirteen years later. Each of the two passages stipulates an asymmetrical proportionality between power and its conditioned or restricted spheres, such that the *free power* against which degrees of restriction are measured is 'non-finite', 'unconditioned', 'positive' or 'absolute' and 'acts out of unconditioned *Selbstmacht*'.

Yet the *Freiheitsschrift* is not only concerned with the fact and feeling of freedom, i.e., with its consequent actuality: the vertical of freedom arises, as it were, only through the plane of system-forming interconnecting essences or 'the positive'. Nor is it with the *substance* of the unruly as separate from the understanding that the *Freiheitsschrift* is concerned but, as *Vom Ich* indicates, with *essence* and the objects with which essence bonds. Where *Vom Ich* sets *Selbstmacht*

³⁹ *Vom Ich als Princip der Philosophie oder über das Unbedingte im menschlichen Wissen*, SW I/1, 179 (hereafter *Vom Ich*); tr. Fritz Marti in *The Unconditional in Human Knowledge. Four Early Essays (1794-1796)*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1980 (hereafter UH), 84.

⁴⁰ *Philosophische Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kritizismus* (hereafter *Briefe*), SW I/1, 330-331; tr. UH, 189.

⁴¹ The first such claim characterises finite being according to Spinoza as 'necessarily *in* another' (SW I/7, 340; PI 12, my emphasis) while Schelling makes the second claim with regard to the organic individual as 'something that has become, only through another' (SW I/7, 346; PI 12), which echoes Schelling's own claims in the *Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie*, that 'nothing individual has the ground of its existence in itself' (SW I/4, 130; PR 155). The third claim explicates the consequence of this model of grounding: 'In the circle from which everything becomes it is no contradiction that what generates the one is in turn generated by it. Here there is no first and no last since everything is reciprocally presupposed, none is the other and none is without the other' (SW I/7, 358; PI 33).

against *Objekte*, the *Freiheitsschrift* recasts the latter as *Gegenstände*, that is, as the modes of activity forming the power they stand against. While *Vom Ich* had already executed the move from the *Timaeus* essay's *Substanz* to *Wesen*, the *Freiheitsschrift* more fully develops essence as the 'vital bond'⁴² of the unlimited X in the *schlechthin* unlimited, of the restricted in and against the positive and the positive in the restricted, whereby spheres of activity are logically identical to their restriction and essence is their dynamic articulation. The law of the ground emerges from this common medium.

It is important to note that the topology in which these restricted spheres form is itself unbounded. In terms of the later Identity philosophy on which the *Freiheitsschrift* draws, this is 'das All'⁴³ in which power is positive when it creates the positions from which spheres arise. That the totality of positions fall within the whole is due less to the transcendental or ideal character of totality than to the disorder that by definition exceeds, environs, and informs the positions or dimensions of a power. Hence the antithesis of the free and the restricted does not map on to an underlying antithesis of what acts and what is acted on or against, nor onto a difference in kind such as between *Selbstmacht* and *Objekte* but rather, according to the theory of the proposition in the *Freiheitsschrift*, it itself maps what is 'positive' in both the unbounded and the restricted. According to this theory, to determine 'positively' means to determine *kata dunamin* or according to power,⁴⁴ a determination differentially expressed in the proposition. 'A is B', that is, means that the positive in A is the positive in B (identity as power),⁴⁵ but in different degrees (difference in position and potency), since B is not by itself but by virtue of the A in it.⁴⁶ Hence the proposition is irreversible (Schelling's law of identity states, among other things, that $(A=B) \neq (B=A)$ ⁴⁷ so that the posited always creates direction in the positive, or the affirmed in the affirming. The proposition is also the expression of the interconnection (*Zusammenhang*) of essences and *Gegenstände*, because nothing individual exists except 'in another'⁴⁸ that *stands against* and so forms its sphere of activity. In consequence, spheres arise as the restricted in the whole or as 'the ataxia of forces', while

⁴² *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 362: 'lebendige Band'; PI: 37: 'living nexus'.

⁴³ That identity is the universe is stated in the *Darstellung* (SW I/4, 129; PR 154) and becomes an important theme throughout Schelling's subsequent engagements with identity and nature, returning in the *Freiheitsschrift* to the relation of Spirit and the *Potenzen*. Further substantiating the *Freiheitsschrift*'s claim that all his previous work was naturephilosophy (SW I/7, 333; PI 3), following the extensive 'Supplement to the Introduction' to the *Ideen zur einer Philosophie der Natur* of 1803 (SW I/2, 57-72; IPN 43-55), Schelling added the essay 'Über das Verhältniß des Realen und Idealen in der Natur' to preface the 1806 edition of the *Von der Weltseele* (SW I/2, 359-360) and retained it in the third edition of 1809. The theme is further developed in the Würzburg lectures of 1804, *System der gesamten Philosophie und der Naturephilosophie insbesondere* and the two sets of *Naturephilosophischen Aphorismen* (1806) drawn from them (especially SW I/7, 147-8) and published in the *Jarbbücher der Medicin als Wissenschaft*.

⁴⁴ On the constant conjunction of *kata dunamin* and *kata phusin* in Plato and its legacy in Schelling, see chapter 2 of my *Philosophies of Nature after Schelling* (London and New York: Continuum, 2006).

⁴⁵ That a relation is 'identical in the essence of Being and different only in potency' only therefore entails an *analogy* between two processes (ground and existence are related as gravity and light), as Heidegger claims (1971: 138), when ground is not thought, as Heidegger notes Schelling does think (1971: 133), *kata dunamin* or according to power, which is the 'essence of absolute identity' and 'the ground of reality' (SW I/4, 145; PR 164).

⁴⁶ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 341; PI 13: 'if one puts forward the proposition: "The perfect is the imperfect", the meaning is this: the imperfect is not due to that through which it is imperfect, but rather through the perfect that is in it'.

⁴⁷ Schelling states the 'real meaning of the law of the identity' (SW I/7, 342; PI 14) as 'no sort of combination can transform what is by nature derivative into what is by nature original' (SW I/7, 340; PI 12), since the copula in the proposition bonds antecedent to consequent (SW I/7, 342; PI 14). The irreversibility of its factors therefore follows from that law.

⁴⁸ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 346; PI 19

the positive is always the whole or the unity; what stands against it [*das ihm entgegenstehende*] is separation of the whole, discord, ataxia of forces.⁴⁹

Accordingly, since A is not positive unless it has antecedence (disorder) and consequences, it is not the case that essence consists only in the positive rather than the posited, in which case essence would be power without consequent, which is contradictory.⁵⁰ Essence, then, is a function, an articulation of power. That the positive requires consequences has as its consequence that the positive, articulated by essence as the production or separation of existing and grounding, *acquires* its antecedence to dynamic ataxia *consequent upon* the latter's introduction. At the same time, the positive remains *in* the restricted as the articulation of the whole.

This is why, for Schelling,⁵¹ essence or *Wesen* does not occupy 'the dimension... of substantiality' or *substantia* by which Boethius and Cicero translated Aristotle's οὐσία,⁵² but, according to Jean-François Courtine, the 'dimension of *Existenz* or *ekstasis*'.⁵³ Existence is a feature of dimension rather than of a state of being because, while *Wesen* involves existence, it is not, by virtue of its additionally having the *grounding* of existence as a function, reducible to it. For Schelling, it is in the mixture of the divisible and the indivisible,⁵⁴ in becoming,⁵⁵ that essence *consists*,⁵⁶ making it synonymous with nature for Plato⁵⁷ as for Schelling,⁵⁸ while extending also to the purely intelligible in the former case. Yet such tensions are not reducibly ideal or conceptual. On the contrary, it is such divisions as these that, while they render *Wesen* or essence as thinkable only through power, they also entail its inseparability from existing. The *Freiheitsschrift* thus follows the *Presentation* in giving essence the basic *form* of the separation of ground from existence, or better, the *movements* of a ground-depositing exceeded by an 'outward going',⁵⁹ each

⁴⁹ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 370; PI 46

⁵⁰ 'If the dependent or the consequent were not independent [there] would be a dependency without a dependent, a consequence without a consequent (*consequential absque consequente*) and, thus, no real consequence; that is, the whole concept would be self-eliminating' (SW I/7, 346; PI 18-19).

⁵¹ If in the 1794 *Timaens*, ed. Hartmut Buchner (Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1994), 'substance of the unruly' (1994: 69) remains Aristotelian despite its focus on the problem of Platonic matter, by 1809, Schelling's *Wesen* has become more Platonic than Aristotelian. By 1854, however, Schelling's *Einleitung in der Philosophie der Mythologie*, SW II/1, 362, cautions 'that οὐσία in Aristotle is not *Wesen* (*essentia*) as in Plato; the Scholastics rightly avoided this and set *substantia* in its place.'

⁵² See Jean-François Courtine's rich analysis of Boethius' and Augustine's translations of Aristotelian οὐσία in 'Les traductions latines d'ΟΥΣΙΑ et la compréhension romano-stoïcienne de l'être', in *Les catégories de l'être* (Paris: PUF, 2003), 11-77. For brief but decisive remarks on Cicero's translations of Platonic οὐσία, see Carlos Lévy, 'Cicero and the *Timaens*', in Gretchen J. Reydams-Schils, ed., *Plato's Timaeus as Cultural Icon* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 104-5.

⁵³ Courtine 2003, op. cit., 91.

⁵⁴ Cf. Lévy, op.cit., p.105: 'οὐσία is used [in Plato] to signify the indivisible being as well as the divisible kind and the mixture of both. Despite some real difficulties in Plato's text, it does display an indisputable coherence [in referring to both] the real being that never changes and... [to those] οὐσία that are less perfect from an ontological point of view.'

⁵⁵ Plato, *Philebus* 26d8, addresses the 'γένεσιν εἰς οὐσίαν' the birth or coming into being of what is.

⁵⁶ Gernot Böhme translates Plato's οὐσία as *Seinsbestand* throughout his *Platons theoretische Philosophie* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2000).

⁵⁷ Lévy (op.cit., p.105) remarks that, at *Phaedrus* 245c-e, 'Plato uses οὐσία and φύσις as synonymous', switching between 'ψυχῆς φύσεως' and 'ψυχῆς οὐσίαν'.

⁵⁸ E.g. SW I/7, 358, PI 32, where 'nature', as the 'ground of God's existence' is an 'indivisible but inseparable essence'.

⁵⁹ SW II/1, 369, for example, characterises essence as what surpasses and what establishes grounds, i.e. as *hinansgehend* and as *zu Grunde liegend*.

of which is a *Gegenstand*, i.e., not an object for but a 'standing-against' involved in the other, forming consequent spheres of activity according to power. Essence, that is, is *forged* in the division or 'real antithesis'⁶⁰ of ground and existence, acquiring its form from the forces in dynamic tension one with another, so that all *Wesen* is *Mittelwesen*⁶¹ and what is true of the 'essence of man' is true of all essences: each is 'its own act'.⁶²

Power is not therefore a simple case of possibility acquiring creative potency where it does not yet overlap with actuality because, as Schelling writes, 'possibility does not entail actuality, and this is really the main object in question'.⁶³ Rather than any such *transition* between the possible and the actual (the actuality of possibility does not entail a change in the state of being of the possible), Schelling insists that it is impossible to 'wrest actuality from potency'.⁶⁴ Potency is its own positive; it becomes, in the *Philosophie der Mythologie*, an 'infinite *potentia existendi* [...] *ein bloßes Können enthaltende Wesen*⁶⁵ whose being is to be 'by its nature... a leaping towards being'.⁶⁶ It is because what the later Schelling calls *Seynkönnen* and what the *Freiheitsschrift* call 'primal being' or 'willing'⁶⁷ remains on the verge of being *by nature* that the *Freiheitsschrift* requires 'a completed philosophy of nature'. The question of possibility, of the ontology of possibility, can only be answered, that is, by a philosophy of nature that, to be complete, must include power without reducing it to what is 'potentially actual' or, in the *Freiheitsschrift*'s terms to a consequent that eliminates what is positive in *Potenz*. The task of that philosophy is not to discover the essence behind, beneath or before the essence of human freedom but to plumb the 'depths of the ground of nature' and to disclose the 'innermost centre' of all effective being or *Wesen*, to ground position in power and dimension in position. As to the problem of what grounds power or force, which the *Darstellung* makes 'the essence of absolute identity' and the 'ground of reality',⁶⁸ neither this identification of ground and power nor the grounding of power in the essence of ground are viable, since the former begs the question and the latter is regressive. For just as 'the essence of ground... can only be antecedent to all ground',⁶⁹ i.e., cannot be ground itself, neither is power self-grounding nor has it, *qua* 'ground of reality', some other, prior ground on which to rest: the essence of power opens onto ungrounding.

This is why the *Un-* or *Urgrund* is a naturephilosophical problem, since the inquiry into the principles by which dimensionality issues from what is without and therefore prior to all dimension and position amounts to an inquiry into how nature comes into being. It may be stated thus: what is the dimension on which dimensionality is itself consequent? The result of ungrounding is precisely that no X may satisfy that antecedent from which X's issue. Thus, creation is not reducible to theogony in the *Freiheitsschrift*. God is not the whole of creation since the ground he contains has other consequents. Similarly, the problem of freedom concerns not

⁶⁰ This was a constant of Schelling's account of coming into being since *Von der Weltseele*: 'real antithesis is possible only between things of one kind and common origin', SW I/2, 397.

⁶¹ *Philosophie und Religion* (hereafter *Religion*) SW I/6, 46; tr. Klaus Ottmann, *Philosophy and Religion* (hereafter PaR). Putnam: Spring, 2010, 34.

⁶² *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 385; PI 63

⁶³ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 373; PI 49

⁶⁴ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 390; PI 68, t.m.

⁶⁵ *Philosophie der Mythologie, Erstes Buch (Monotheismus)*, SW II/2, 49-50

⁶⁶ *Begründung* SW II/3, 102; GP, 160

⁶⁷ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 350; PI 24

⁶⁸ 'Das Wesen des absoluten Identität, insofern sie unmittelbar Grund von Realität ist, ist *Kraft*', *Darstellung*, SW I/4, 145; PR 164.

⁶⁹ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 407; PI 88-89, t.m.

only its human essence, but also, since freedom's roots must lie 'in the independent ground of nature',⁷⁰ in the 'will of the ground'⁷¹ or its 'self-operation',⁷² and so in essence in general: if true of one essence, that is, then true of all. The question of freedom is recast therefore as that of the self-operative range of essence, giving sense to Schelling's identification of *alle Wesen* with *alle Möglichkeiten*.⁷³ essential operative range is actual power. A nature comprising essential operations is therefore one that is primordially a *Potenzzustand*, a not-being in the depths,⁷⁴ an 'infinite *potentia existendi* as mere potency',⁷⁵ or the pre-dimensional, 'placeless',⁷⁶ 'groundless essence'⁷⁷ never recoverable as ground and existence for anything grounded. In other words, if nature is creation, its inexistence is entailed.

The *Freiheitsschrift* therefore inherits the early accounts of freedom's *essence* as requiring an ontology of power without position or thing, the *ground* of power without which creation would neither be 'of' *something* nor 'from' any dimension of being, as well as the trajectory introduced into being by existence. While the meaning of Schelling's 'essence' or *Wesen* is complex,⁷⁸ the *Freiheitsschrift* builds on a structure whose outlines are glimpsed already in *Vom Ich* and in the *Philosophische Briefe*; namely, that an essence is free when its unconditioned power results in its self-positing. Essence, that is, acts or operates just when position is consequent upon power. Since the establishment of position issues from (power) and in (consequent), or has two trajectories, *essence acts according to two operative modes (Wirkungsweisen)*, as ground and as existence.⁷⁹ This 'law of the ground'⁸⁰ is universal throughout the *Freiheitsschrift*'s ontology, clearly marked in its discussions of logic,⁸¹ of the understanding,⁸² organism,⁸³ determination⁸⁴ and order.⁸⁵

⁷⁰ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 371; PI 47, t.m.

⁷¹ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 375; PI 52, t.m.

⁷² *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 379; PI 56

⁷³ *Abhandlung über die Quelle der ewigen Wahrheiten*, SW II/1, 585

⁷⁴ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 405; PI 86

⁷⁵ *Philosophie der Mythologie*, SW II/2, 49

⁷⁶ 'Über das Verhältniß des Realen und Idealen in der Natur', SW I/2, 364

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, SW I/2, 378

⁷⁸ See Jason M. Wirth's concise and nuanced analysis of essence in relation to the time-metaphysics of the *Weltalter*, in his Translator's Introduction' to his version of that work AW, xxxi: 'For Schelling, *das Wesen* names the tension between present being (existence) and the simultaneous intimation of that which is as no longer being (the past) and that which is as not yet being (the future)... The *Wesen* holds together what has being and what is, but which does not have being.' The temporal emphasis in this account of what Schelling elsewhere calls 'the *Wesen* in time is the universal centre-point' (SW I/2, 365), tallies with Hegel's account of *Wesen* in the *Encyclopaedia Logic* as 'the past sublated and conserved' (§112 1991: 176), or mediated immediacy. Rather than explaining essence by temporality, the *Freiheitsschrift* explains temporality or the reciprocal motions of antecedence and consequence, by essence.

⁷⁹ '[O]ne essence actually divides itself in its two modes of operation into two essences..., in one merely ground for existence and in the other merely essence.' (SW I/7, 409; PI 90, t.m.). The German reads, '*... das eine Wesen in seinen zwei Wirkungsweisen sich wirklich in zwei Wesen scheidet..., in dem einen bloß Grund zur Existenz, in dem andern bloß Wesen.*'

⁸⁰ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 346; PI 18, t.m.

⁸¹ The 'law of the ground' states that '[i]n the relation of subject and predicate [... is] that of ground and consequence' (SW I/7, 345-6; PI 18). Note also Schelling's reuse of the categories of the affirming and the affirmed, from the *Würzburg System* (1804) and the two sets of *Naturephilosophical Aphorisms* (1806), as ground and consequent (SW I/7, 340; PI 12).

⁸² 'The understanding is born in the genuine sense in that which is without understanding' (SW I/7, 360; PI 34, t.m.).

⁸³ 'Every organic individual exists, as something that has become, only through another' (SW I/7, 346; PI 18).

⁸⁴ 'Dependence does not determine... and says only that the dependent... can be a consequence only of that of which it is a dependent; dependence does not say what the dependent is or is not' (SW I/7, 346; PI 18).

According to that law, *Wesen* is not therefore 'thing'⁸⁶ but division antecedent to consequent division, the *wiederholte Entfaltung*⁸⁷ of the 'vital bond which arises in division' such that consequents are consequents to the extent they are *not* that upon which they are consequents, so that 'at each point of division of forces a new essence emerges from nature'.⁸⁸ In the sense that essence divides but does not separate forces;⁸⁹ essence arises as consequent *upon* antecedent, determining the latter as the antecedent that it becomes. Identity is creative⁹⁰ because its essence is 'power' or 'force [*Kraft*]',⁹¹ to which it belongs to differentiate: ground from existence, original from derived, antecedent from consequent. While therefore identity itself *is* the universe,⁹² the operations of essence ensure that nature 'is everything that lies beyond the absolute being of absolute identity'⁹³ and consists in the asymmetrical and irreversible self-differentiation of identity. What applies to *one* essence – that it is its own act⁹⁴ – applies therefore to all. The *Freiheitsschrift*'s famous equation 'willing is primal being',⁹⁵ means that whatever is, operates as 'real self-positing, a primal willing of the ground which makes itself into something and is the ground of all essentiality [*Wesenheit*]'.⁹⁶ What is essential in essence is that it is inseparable from the *structure* of willing, of being 'on the verge of being'. Possibility, then, is not the ground of freedom, but of nature. Essence is therefore the act or operation by which something arises from what it is not, or *creation*. It is because creation – not only in the sense of what is created but also in its act, its 'being *wirksam*', that is, effective, its *wesen-ing* – is nature that the 'completed philosophy of nature' remains as necessary to the *Freiheitsschrift* as the *Briefe* preceding them required.

3. The Prior has its Actuality in the Consequent⁹⁷

Schelling's essay 'Ist einer Philosophie der Geschichte möglich?' (1797) provides an early constellation of the problems driving Schelling's naturephilosophy, and in particular of the status of possibility in nature. Its problematic, however, is also what preoccupies the *Freiheitsschrift*, namely, the conjoint hypotheses that, first, if freedom or *Selbstmacht* is to exist at all, its roots must 'lie in the independent grounds of nature'.⁹⁸ For *Geschichte*, 'nature in its freedom' is evident as it 'develops along all possible trajectories' insofar as 'all possible trajectories' makes it

⁸⁵ '[N]owhere does it appear as if order and form were what is original but rather as if the initial unruly had been brought to order' (SW I/7, 359; PI 34).

⁸⁶ As Heidegger (1971: 119) notes, in the *Freiheitsschrift*, '*Wesen* is not meant in the sense of the 'essence' of a thing [*Sache*]', echoing Schelling: 'thing' is the most 'abstract concept of essences in the world [*Weltwesen*]' (SW I/7, 349; PI 22, t.m.)

⁸⁷ *Band*, SW I/2, 375

⁸⁸ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 362; PI 37, t.m.

⁸⁹ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 361; PI 36

⁹⁰ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 345; PI 18

⁹¹ *Darstellung* SW I/4, 145; PR 164

⁹² *Darstellung* SW I/4, 129; PR 154

⁹³ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 358; PI 32; cf. SW I/4, 203; PR 199

⁹⁴ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 385; PI 63

⁹⁵ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 350; PI 24

⁹⁶ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 385; PI 63

⁹⁷ *Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie* SW II/1, 375, paraphrasing Aristotle *De anima* 414b29-30: "the earlier type always exists potentially in that which follows".

⁹⁸ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 371; PI 47, t.m.

'absolutely impossible' to determine a trajectory a priori.⁹⁹ A trajectory is not free, that is, insofar as it is possible, but insofar as it is actual, so that it is the *actual free trajectory* that is indeterminable a priori – certainly 'relatively, in relation to ourselves', but not, Schelling cautions, 'absolutely'.¹⁰⁰ In other words, the problem of an *actually free* trajectory in nature is pinioned on its absolute determinability as free.

Second therefore, the requirement that philosophy (conceived, in 1796, as an *a priori* science) of natural history (there conceived as an *a posteriori* science) must conceive nature not only in the form of the repeated 'cycle of acts'¹⁰¹ constitutive of animal species or individuals, that is, as 'things... the abstract concept of *Weltwesen*',¹⁰² but in its development. If nature's freedom is the full development of all possible trajectories, natural history does not follow a trajectory from possible to actual, because nothing is possible outside nature.¹⁰³ Nature, that is, comprises actuality and all possibility. Yet nature is not nature without what the History essay calls 'progressivity',¹⁰⁴ i.e., without all possible developmental pathways, nor without what the *Freiheitsschrift* calls true consequents, i.e. consequents independent of their antecedents, nor again without true antecedence, i.e., without creation. Accordingly, if nature is possible but not determinable a priori, natural possibility may be defined as the degree to which potency is 'raised to *actus*' in 'creation in operation [*wirklichen Schöpfung*]'.¹⁰⁵ This is not the becoming-actual of the possible but rather the degree of raising in which the acts that potency performs consist; the raising, in other words, is the actuality, the *effectiveness* of potency, or possibility is operativity at zero potency, operativity without operation.

While the *Geschichte*'s formulation of the problem of determinability arising from indetermination, cast in relative terms ('in relation to ourselves'), prompts the question as to the relation of the a priori to the a posteriori sciences, in its non-relative or absolute form, it asks after the emergence of determinate trajectory from all possible trajectories. As the *Freiheitsschrift* says, however, 'possibility does not comprise actuality, and this is really the main obstacle [*Gegenstand*] in question'.¹⁰⁶ As we have seen, while the law of the ground explains the origin of position from dimensionless potency as such, ground does not explain dimensionlessness, because that law applies also to ground itself: 'the essence of ground... can only be what precedes all ground'.¹⁰⁷ The question of essence, or of the ontological state consequent upon its operativity or actuality, its *Wirkungsweisen*,¹⁰⁸ is precisely the question of how what is emerges from what was not what it now is, or, for example, how understanding emerges from what is without understanding, order from *ataxia*, ground from its antecedent.

Accordingly, the law of the ground entails that auto-positioning that is *Selbstmacht* be explained from the dimensionless, or ground from unground. In accordance with that law, the Unground is *primal* ground (*Urgrund*) not because it is ground itself, but because it is that essence

⁹⁹ 'Ist eine Philosophie der Geschichte möglich?' (hereafter *Geschichte*) SW I/1, 469-470

¹⁰⁰ *Geschichte*, SW I/1, 470

¹⁰¹ *Geschichte*, SW I/, 470

¹⁰² *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 349; 22

¹⁰³ As Schelling writes in the *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*, "Anything whose conditions simply cannot be given in nature, must be absolutely impossible." SW I/3, 571, tr. Peter Heath, *System of Transcendental Idealism*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978, 186

¹⁰⁴ *Geschichte* I, 470

¹⁰⁵ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 398; PI 78

¹⁰⁶ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 373; PI 49, t.m.

¹⁰⁷ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 407; PI 88-89

¹⁰⁸ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 409; PI 90, t.m.

that 'precedes all ground and all existence'. Just as Schelling is clear that unground is the not-being (*Nichtsein*) of all antithesis and therefore does not contain them, so auto-positioning (*Selbstsetzen*) is 'auto' because it does not *actualise* a position already given or contained in the unground, since the latter is itself the not-being of position or trajectory, a non-dimensionality, but rather positioning itself. When therefore the *Freiheitsschrift* defines the task of a 'completed naturephilosophy' as 'to show how each succeeding process approaches closer to the essence of nature, until the innermost centre unfolds into the highest division of forces',¹⁰⁹ the problem is precisely stated. The innermost centre of nature cannot be located insofar as it may be *occupied* by any existent, that is, according to a consequent or a posteriori metric, such as an animal act-cycle, the above and below, right and left, behind and before by which Aristotle locates the relative dimensionality of human being,¹¹⁰ or the beginning, middle, and end that give the dimensions of process.¹¹¹ To attempt this location is to pose the 'question of the ground of dimensionality'.¹¹² Since according to the law of the ground, ground is not self-grounding, but rather auto-positioning forms place from the 'placeless',¹¹³ unground is the necessary antecedent of the origins of dimensionality or the emergence of ground.

It was this that so shocked Eschenmayer; yet as he noted, there is nothing here that would strike an astrophysicist or a geologist as bizarre. The earth, for example, rests on nothing but the homeostasis issuing from the real opposition of gravitational forces. Its formation is not the slow development of a seed, but the reduplicated development, the '*wiederholte Entfaltung*',¹¹⁴ or the division of these forces from which the vital bond arises. Just as Schelling rejects the actualisation of potentiality as the model of development, neither does the first precede the second that patiently awaits actualisation in a presently expanding series; rather, essence – the reciprocal but asymmetrical deposition of ground by existence – overpowers itself, is potentiated beyond its current state, and so acquires a past, a prior it cannot recover in accordance with the law of the ground.

The explanation of the emergence or construction of dimensionality had become the overt objective of the naturephilosophy since the *Allgemeine Deduktion des dynamischen Prozesses* (1800). The law of the ground entails that dimension is created from that which is without dimension. That law, as we have seen, governs the co-articulation of antecedence and consequence and, due to the asymmetry attendant upon the ultimate consequence of that law, namely, that unground is prior to all ground, the emergence of antecedence and consequence from what *was* without these, now *is* these, and *will* consist in their consequents. The 'innermost centre of nature' is therefore precisely the emergence of dimensionality from the non-dimensional; how process or 'becoming', the only concept 'adequate to the nature of things',¹¹⁵ becomes the actuality of the prior in the consequent.¹¹⁶ This is the task confronting a complete

¹⁰⁹ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 362; PI 37

¹¹⁰ Aristotle, *On the Parts of Animals* 284b21-30, cited Schelling, *Einleitung in der Philosophie der Mythologie*, SW II/1, 439.

¹¹¹ Aristotle, *On the Heavens* 268a6-13, cited Schelling SW II/1, 434.

¹¹² *Einleitung in der Philosophie der Mythologie* SW II/1, 435

¹¹³ *Band* SW I/2, 364

¹¹⁴ *Band* SW I/2, 375

¹¹⁵ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 358-9; PI 33

¹¹⁶ *Einleitung in der Philosophie der Mythologie* SW II/1, 375

philosophy of nature: the emergence of emergence following the becoming proper to *Wesen*, the γένεσιν εἰς οὐσίαν that already formed the central problem of Schelling's *Timaeus* commentary.¹¹⁷

With a view to such completeness, Bruce Matthews has recently argued that 'life as the schema of freedom' should be taken as the 'metric' Schelling introduces for *Wesen*'s becomings.¹¹⁸ Such a view is consonant with the idea of Schelling turning, in the *Freiheitschrift*, from a naturalistic to a hermeneutic¹¹⁹ or analogical¹²⁰ naturephilosophy according to which, for example, gravity and light are analogies for stages in the development of a free essence, rather than ground's own 'self-operation'.¹²¹ The *Freiheitschrift*'s claim that the vital bond constitutes 'the centre of forces' seems to confirm and support this view:

The forces separated (but not completely sundered) in this division are the material from which the body will later be configured; but the vital bond that arises in this division, from the depths of the natural ground, as the midpoint of the forces is the soul.¹²²

Yet two things complicate the matter. Firstly, life or the vital bond 'arises' from the division of forces as their centre, the measure introduced into the dimensionless *Potenzzustand* from which in turn dimension emerges. Because the law of the ground entails that what arises does so from what is not it, nature is not reducible to life. While it may be retorted that a centre is not only geometrical but also temporal, i.e., that *from which* a past emerges for that essence, the emergent past cannot represent the recovery of the unground that precedes all ground, and therefore all division of ground and existence that is the operation of essence. This is why no animal act-cycle, as in *Gesechichte*, nor any dimensional coordinates consequent upon what exists, such as the anthropic form advocated by Aristotle for this purpose and which Schelling discusses in the *Einleitung in der Philosophie der Mythologie*, can constitute the measure of nature, which consists in all trajectories. Dimension, in other words, can only arise from the dimensionless.

The second complication concerns the emergence and development of 'schema', that is, the nature of the concept and the emergence of understanding rather than only its form. Since the *Freiheitschrift* is explicit that the understanding is not exempt from the law of the ground, that it derives, in other words from an irreversible division from what is without understanding; the understanding's form is not to be found in an echo of itself, but in the divisions that precede and do not resemble it. It is therefore to the ground-consequent structure that, according to the *Freiheitschrift*, *phusis* exhibits as *logos*,¹²³ that we now turn.

¹¹⁷ *Timaeus*, H. Buchner, hrsg. Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1994, 63-4.

¹¹⁸ See Bruce Matthews' excellent and rewarding study, *Schelling's Organic Form of Philosophy: Life as the Schema of Freedom*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011.

¹¹⁹ See Dale E. Snow, *Schelling and the End of Idealism*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, 67-92 and Andrew Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy*. New York and London: Routledge, 1993, 30-44, for the "hermeneutics of nature".

¹²⁰ Heidegger, 1971, 137-9, defends an analogical reading of the naturephilosophy, with support from the *Freiheitschrift* SW I/7, 358; PI 32-3, and "justifying" such comparisons on the basis of the essential identity of the terms forming the analogy.

¹²¹ *Freiheitschrift* SW I/7, 381; PI 58, t.m.

¹²² *Freiheitschrift* SW I/7, 362

¹²³ 'Light or the ideal principle is, as the eternal antithesis of the dark principle, the creating word which redeems the life hidden in the ground from non-being and raises it from potency to actuality' (SW I/7, 404; PI 84).

4. Understanding and Unground: the Generation of Orders in the Dimensionless

[T]he conviction that all thought and knowledge are completely subjective and that Nature altogether lacks reason and thought [meant that] the dynamic factor... was in no sense recognised in its identity with the spiritual.¹²⁴

Contrary to Tilliette's dismissal of the claim that the *Freiheitsschrift* is a 'remake' of the *Naturphilosophie*,¹²⁵ we have seen that Schelling's naturephilosophy undergoes substantial revision there. The 'ungrounding' of essence onto creation; the derivation of systems of cognition from 'the system of the world'¹²⁶ or the necessary connection of the former with the latter;¹²⁷ nature as the 'older revelation';¹²⁸ all demonstrate precisely the being 'in another',¹²⁹ without which nothing is and by which essence generates structures. The nature thus remade in accordance with the law of the ground is extended not merely ontically, that is, in the addition of new objects or things (word, spirit, etc.), but also ontologically, since any nature whatever necessarily embraces the dimensionless non-being or *Potenzzustand* in the division of which, since nature is 'all being [*alles Seyn*]',¹³⁰ becoming issues.

We have seen that essence consists not in things but in its two modes of operation or, following Heidegger, its two 'dimensions'.¹³¹ It is the non-sundering division of forces by means of which the vital bond arises, like the wedge that holds the split log open, conjoining ground and existence as it potentiates in each direction, just as it creates them. The law of the ground is therefore the amplification of tension in identity or the emergence of dimension in the dimensionless. The completed philosophy of nature must seek in the 'highest division of forces' for 'the ground of dimensionality' as the 'innermost centre of nature'.

Up to this point, the law of the ground maintains the positive by the repeated development of divisions until it comes to the undivided *Potenzzustand* requisite to essential becoming. From this anterior or Unground [*Ur- oder vielmehr Ungrund*],¹³² division arises positively, that is, unprecedentedly or asymmetrically: even that the Unground itself divides¹³³ and, each being whole or positive, divides again, is a consequence of rather than antecedent to, its own essence. Wherever therefore there is division, there is maintained positivity, so that separation is not sundering but repeated development. When therefore the understanding is said to have as its 'first effect in nature' the 'division of forces', the understanding is treated in accordance with the law of the ground as an existing consequent upon its grounding, or upon the division of forces

¹²⁴ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 333; PI 3

¹²⁵ Tilliette (1992) I: 539

¹²⁶ *Privatvorlesungen* SW I/7, 421; IE, 197

¹²⁷ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 336-7; PI 7-8

¹²⁸ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 415; PI 98

¹²⁹ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 346; PI 19

¹³⁰ The full passage from the *Aphorismen über die Naturephilosophie* (1806) runs: 'You may neither suppose choice or arbitrariness here, but only the beautiful necessity of an infinitely loving nature, itself without reflection. Infinite, for there is a ground for all finitude; but such a thing is neither in that nature, for it is just one with itself and not doubled, nor outside it, for it itself is all being' (SW I/7, 199). The ground of all finitude, that is, is dimensionless pre-nature, as in the *Freiheitsschrift*.

¹³¹ Heidegger 1971, 137

¹³² *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 406; PI 87

¹³³ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 408; PI 89

in which its activity consists. Hence it is the *Freiheitsschrift*'s account of the understanding as consequent and asymmetrical with respect to its ground that means the latter 'irreducibly remains' following the exhaustion of the understanding's operations. The law of the ground, in other words, is not a version of the principle of sufficient reason because it does not belong to the understanding, as a concept wielded by it over a domain reducible to it, but rather belongs to the mode of operation of ground itself. It is because ground is a 'self-operating' that is or acts following its own necessity, that it constitutes a *Gegenstand* for the understanding, standing against it as resistance, rather than furnishing the understanding with an object proper to its own domain. The antecedence of forces to their division is therefore the condition under which alone the understanding can arise, and arise as *positively* restricted by what exceeds it but to which it belongs as to its own medium or nature.

From this, we gain a crucial insight into the nature of the Schellingian concept. Like the thesis of inductive identity in the *Ideas*, repeated under Empedoclean guise at the outset of the *Freiheitsschrift*,¹³⁴ by which necessity is accorded to the formation of concepts; and as in the *Begründung der positiven Philosophie* towards the end of Schelling's career, the becoming universal to all being that arrives at consciousness arises asymmetrically to a self-consciousness which, precisely because it is self-consciousness, is 'not equal to the consciousness of nature'.¹³⁵ Thus concepts remain free products of their genesis, and thus act according to an 'independent power' against their immediate generative source in 'the soul'.¹³⁶

This is why the word is 'spoken out *into* nature'¹³⁷ rather than *over* it. Due to the law of the ground, the word does not recover its antecedent divisions as proto-semantic but repeats them as directionality 'into' a nature that is *gegenständlich* for it, i.e., that stands against and so forms it. The law of the ground thus gives word and world a common medium in the essence or operativity by which each works in another. Essence therefore is the recursion of operations in each, the 'universe in the universe'¹³⁸ or the innermost centre of nature.

That therefore the community of forces remains positive, unsundered, in the emergence of the understanding from what does not have it, is a precisely directed critique of the transcendental character of the understanding. The partiality of the concept is a consequence of its irreducible particularity and its dynamic community precisely because it does not have an origin or source separable either from the becoming universal in all being or from the *Gegenstand* of which, *qua* concept, it is the consequent. The Unground does not sanction, therefore, a reworking of the cognitive division between the knowable and the unknowable 'relative to ourselves', but rather, because it is *Urgrund* or ground's antecedent, an account of the understanding's *Umwelt*, a ground that, as its own, it cannot master and reduce.

The *Freiheitsschrift*'s 'generative dialectic'¹³⁹ of the understanding therefore maintains its positivity in the sense that its actualisation pathways open it ultimately to the *Ur-* and Unground it cannot recover, on the one hand, and thus demonstrates in turn why the understanding produces effects in the nature with which it maintains dynamic community, and thus demonstrates the 'identity' of dynamics and spirit that the *Freiheitsschrift* early announces as its

¹³⁴ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 337; PI 8

¹³⁵ *Begründung* SW II/3, 6; GP 93

¹³⁶ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 347; PI 19

¹³⁷ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 395; PI 74, t.m.

¹³⁸ *System der gesamten Philosophie und der Naturphilosophie insbesondere* SW I/6, 207; cf. *Aphorismen* SW

I/7, 186

¹³⁹ *Einleitung in der Philosophie der Mythologie* SW II/1, 330

elucidatory objective (SW I/7, 333; PI 3). This, in the end, is why the *Freiheitsschrift* extends the law of identity into a law of the ground. That nature is what exceeds identity does not tell us *what* but *how* nature is. Namely, as essence or the total set of operations of all possibilities (“*alle Wesen*” are “*alle Möglichkeiten*”, SW II/1, 585) or essence according to all powers. The law of the ground makes identity 'creative' (SW I/7, 345; PI 18), potentiating the division of grounding in existing.

What is it, finally, that *Verstand* understands? As the containing is higher than the contained,¹⁴⁰ the understanding's consequents – concepts – contain what they conceive. Since the container cannot be contained by what it contains, the understanding is *logically* higher than its content (nature, or the divisions of prius from posterius; ground from consequent) but *identical* according to essence and differentiated in accordance with power (higher/lower). That is, the content of the concept is not the *Gegenstand* but the divisions that articulate the dimensions in which *Gegenstände* form systems. Logical orders, then, do not rise *over* nature since nature is nothing other than the self-division of essence into ground and existence. Rather they rise *from* it, so that the content of such an order is not *this* ground and *that* existent but the movements that divide, the potencies that intensify the division, and the dimensions to which these give rise. As the *Philosophie der Mythologie* puts it, reiterating the *Freiheitsschrift's* claim that '*Urseyn ist Wollen*', 'willing is not only the beginning but also the content of the first emergent'.¹⁴¹ What is conceived in the concept is essence, the operation or act that grounds and exceeds the consequent that its concept is, a past or a prius therefore 'that cannot be resolved into understanding [*Verstand*]'.¹⁴² When, accordingly, the effect of the understanding in nature is characterised as the 'unity hidden in the ground and containing all rais[ing] itself up',¹⁴³ this does not therefore mean that in the end, ground is contained in the understanding, but rather that the all in the understanding (unity revealed) is lesser in extent than the all in ground (unity hidden) from which division the former arises. Yet it is the *form* of these motions that yields their systematic interconnection, the 'universe in the universe', via the law of the ground: the understanding arises from what is without it, just as logical orders entail the irreducibility of the ataxia in which they divide. Because the unity of the understanding arises in division, it conceives, by means of the division from which it derives, the unity of the divisions it contains along with the dynamic community (the *positivity* of division) from which it arises.

What is consequent upon the understanding therefore is nature (excess over identity) understood in accordance with power – the *structures* and *formations* by which forces articulate emergent and developing potentiations or auto-positings from what has, at the beginning, no dimensionality, the morphogenesis alone adequate to nature. It should be emphasised, however, that the present essay has proceeded only so far as the analysis of *Selbständigkeit* and its resistants; a free philosophy, like free mathematics, issues in a production of nature of which nature is subject but not, for that very reason, identical to its outcome.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. SW I/7, 346; PI 18-19, where Schelling discusses the *Begriffensein*, the 'being conceived' or 'contained' of all in all.

¹⁴¹ *Einleitung in der Philosophie der Mythologie* SW II/1, 388

¹⁴² *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 360; PI 34, t.m.

¹⁴³ *Freiheitsschrift* SW I/7, 361; PI 36, t.m