

To the Unprethinkable and Back Again

**Schelling's *Potenzenlehre* between *Naturphilosophie* and Predication
Theory**

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Introduction

After Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling had published the *Freiheitschrift* in 1809, he spent the rest of his long philosophical life (lasting until his death in 1854) avoiding almost any publication, as he worked on a series of remarkable texts, written largely in the form of lectures, with some versions of them presented to the public.¹ These texts have addressed questions of *Naturphilosophie*, of the essence and existence of God, of the becoming of things, as well as those of mythology and religion. In order to address all of these questions, Schelling developed a conceptual apparatus based around what he called “potencies”. To give a satisfactory account of this apparatus, Schelling’s so-called “*Potenzenlehre*”, is a highly demanding task, and one which this work seeks to accomplish. In order to set the stage for this forthcoming investigation, it would be good to articulate its main claim, which will be elaborated upon and explicated later, straight away: the potencies form a logical-ontological structure, its elements being not discrete entities, but functions, and its purpose in Schelling’s philosophy is to articulate determination. This structure is not substantial; it rather operates like a network of placeholders of which each plays a certain role, which is fulfilled by various existences in the world. This structure of universal becoming² is Schelling’s “logic”: it is a formal “schema”³, a schematic and conceptual framework, recapitulating the becoming of all things. The *Potenzenlehre* is Schelling’s latest, most mature attempt to think systematically. In the course of this work, I will establish a definition of the potency dialectic, as well as a detailed description of its operations and its significance for late Schelling.⁴ It is appropriate to

1 For a list, see Garcia Romero, M.: *The Significance of Aristotle for Schelling’s Last Philosophy*. Unpublished dissertation, Ludwig-Universität München, 2008, pp. 378f. [cited henceforth as *Significance of Aristotle*].

2 The potencies are principles of being, but also functions of becoming, as is claimed explicitly in *Weltalter* II 130.

3 What I understand here by Schema has little to do with Kant’s concept of transcendental schematism, but is rather the simplest meaning of the word “Schema”, i.e. from the Greek “σχῆμα”, plan.

4 The potencies do indeed construct a dialectic. Christian Iber describes Schelling’s dialectical method as marking the “Momente der Totalität des Seienden” (moments of the totality of being – Iber, C.: *Das Andere der Vernunft als ihr Prinzip. Grundzüge der philosophischen Entwicklung Schellings mit einem Ausblick auf die nachidealistischen Philosophiekonzeptionen Heideggers und Adornos*. Berlin: 1994, p. 283 [cited henceforth as *Das Andere der Vernunft*]). Some commentators read Schelling as a kind of naturphilosophical materialist. Černý writes that Schelling’s philosophy presents the objective dialectic of nature as a condition for the dialectic of the spirit (“objektive Dialektik der Natur als Voraussetzung für die Dialektik des tätigen Geistes”) – Černý, J.: “Von der *natura naturans* zum ‚unvordenklichen Seyn‘. Eine Linie des Materialismus bei Schelling?” In Sandkühler, H. J.: *Natur und geschichtlicher Prozeß. Studien zur Naturphilosophie F. W. J. Schelling*, Frankfurt/Main: 1986, pp. 127-144, here p. 128. Wolfgang Förster employs a very similar line of argumentation in his article “Schelling als Theoretiker und Dialektiker der Natur” on the basis of his analysis of the naturphilosophical series of stages (Stufenfolge) in Schelling’s works. See Förster, W.: “Schelling als Theoretiker der Dialektik der Natur.” In Sandkühler, H. J.: *Natur und geschichtlicher Prozeß. Studien zur Naturphilosophie F. W. J. Schelling*, Frankfurt/Main: 1986, pp. 175-201, esp. pp. 182-183. And of course Schelling’s dialectic is most prominently influenced by that of Plato and Aristotle – see an analysis of this in Krüger, M.D.: *Göttliche Freiheit. Die*

begin such an investigation with a few introductory historical remarks on the *Potenzenlehre* and the role the concept of potency plays in Schelling's philosophy, to which I turn.

The concept of potency was introduced by Schelling in his text *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur*. In this text, potencies are the three moments of unity between nature and the ideal world, with different potencies characterised by different degrees of "Einbildung des Endlichen ins Unendliche".⁵ Schelling introduces the potencies into his thought in order to explain the apparent dichotomy between, but also the convergence of, nature and the idea. In other texts of Schelling's so-called "*naturphilosophische phase*", the potencies are far less prominent, but they play an important role in the *Identitätsphilosophie*, where they express relations of determination, i.e. the various proportions of determining powers are expressed through the potencies – the topic of determination wrought by the *Potenzenlehre* will be a recurrent theme of this work, making appearances in every chapter. In the three drafts of the *Weltalter*, the potencies form what is apparently a history of the world or its "ages", one which has a rather anthropological character. In the writings of 1840s (*Darstellung des philosophischen Empirismus*, *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*, *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie*) *Naturphilosophie* appears anew in Schelling's thought with the help of the *Potenzenlehre*. In light of these different domains Schelling lets his *Potenzenlehre* unfold in, it is hard to avoid the question: what exactly is the *Potenzenlehre* for Schelling to let it unfold in so many various domains? This work attempts to answer this question. It appears that the *Potenzenlehre* becomes, in the years after 1810, the basis of Schelling's entire philosophy, and that it forms what Barbara Loer so aptly names in her book the "structure of the absolute"

Trinitätslehre in Schellings Spätphilosophie. Tübingen: 2008, pp. 128-130. [Cited henceforth as *Göttliche Freiheit*].

5 English: "setting the finite in the infinite". See SW II 66 and 68 where Schelling writes: "Aber eben deswegen, weil Natur und ideelle Welt, jede in sich einen Punkt der Absolutheit hat, wo die beiden Entgegengesetzten zusammenfließen, muß auch jede in sich wieder, wenn nämlich jede als die besondere Einheit unterschieden werden soll, die drei Einheiten unterscheidbar enthalten, die wir in dieser Unterscheidbarkeit und Unterordnung unter eine Einheit Potenzen nennen, so daß dieser allgemeine Typus der Erscheinung sich nothwendig auch im Besonderen und als derselbe und gleiche in der realen und idealen Welt wiederholt. [...] Es ist bereits erinnert worden, daß die besondere Einheit eben deswegen, weil sie dieß ist, auch in sich und für sich wieder alle Einheiten begreife. So die Natur. Diese Einheiten, deren jede einen bestimmten Grad der Einbildung des Unendlichen ins Endliche bezeichnet, werden in drei Potenzen der Naturphilosophie dargestellt." [English: But precisely because of this, since nature and the ideal world each have a point of absolution in themselves, where both opposed poles run together, and if namely both nature and the ideal world are to be distinguished as a special unity, each must also again contain in itself in differentiated fashion the three units which we in their differentiation and subordination under a unity call potencies, so that this general type of appearance repeats itself with necessity also in the specific and as one and the same in the real and ideal world. [...] I have already reminded the reader that the special unity also grasps again in and for itself all units. Thus is nature. These units, each of which is designated as a determinate degree of setting the infinite in the finite, are presented in the three potencies of *Naturphilosophie*." See also SW II, 110. Unless otherwise specified, all English translations are mine.

(“die Struktur des Absoluten”).⁶ I must here however remark that the scope of this work prevents me from treating the *Potenzenlehre* in its entirety – I will restrict myself to the latest stages of its development, i.e. the stages in which the *Potenzlehre* is maximally determined in light of all its previous iterations. I will hence concern myself mainly with two late *Potenzenlehre* texts, namely with the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* and the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie*. I will very occasionally direct myself to other earlier works when they provide valuable explanations and insights into the ideas of the later texts.

The texts in which Schelling develops his *Potenzenlehre* may seem to be repetitive through and through, although they contain essential variations on the potency theme. Almost all of those texts are lectures, produced and given in different places at different times. This could be the reason for their repetitiveness – Schelling begins each text as if anew in order to introduce his audience to his project. This is an almost trivial reason, and it cannot fully explain why the beginnings in most late texts, and hence also the arguments and conclusions are indeed *genuinely new* and actually – as to their detail – *different* from each other. In the entire span of almost forty years during which Schelling developed the *Potenzenlehre*, he has used various notations and terminologies in order to symbolise the potencies (-A, +A, ±A vs. A, A², A³, in addition to complex formulas of contracting and expansive forces in the *Weltalter* or the *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*). He has hence viewed the potency structure as a whole in various ways in different texts. In some of these texts, developed in different periods, Schelling takes the potencies to be natural powers (units of natural power), giving rise to all phenomena (see this in the *Allgemeine Deduktion des dynamischen Prozesses oder die Kategorien der Physik* von 1801, but also in the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* of 1843-4) and as the most fundamental logical-ontological units of being (this is also in the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*). In other texts they are presented from a completely different angle, as stages of the existence of the world, ages or epochs (*Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen* from 1810, as well as, obviously, the *Weltalter*, in all its drafts of 1811-1814).⁷ The highly remarkable

6 Loer, B.: *Das Absolute und die Wirklichkeit in Schellings Philosophie*. Berlin/New York: 1974, p. 23, [cited henceforth as *Absolute und Wirklichkeit*].

7 There are definitely some substantial differences between the *Potenzenlehre* of the latest texts and that of the *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen* and the *Weltalter*. There is, nevertheless, also considerable similarity, which was already remarked upon and described by Justus Schwarz in 1935, hence I avail myself of the earlier texts when needed, to a limited extent. On the relationship between the *Potenzenlehre* of 1810-1814 to that of the 1840s and later, see Schwarz, J.: “Die Lehre von Potenzen in Schellings Alterphilosophie“ in *Kant-Studien* 40/1-2 (1935) pp. 118-148; Grant, I.H.: “The Law of Insuperable Environment: What is Exhibited in the “Exhibition of the Process of Nature” in *Analecta Hermeneutica*, 5 (2013), cited after <http://journals.library.mun.ca/ojs/index.php/analecta/article/view/1368/1147>; Schröder, H.: “Die Grundlagen der Lehre Schellings von den Potenzen in seiner “Reinrationalen Philosophie”“ in *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, Bd. 40, H. 4 (1986), pp. 562-585, [cited henceforth as *Grundlagen der Lehre*]; as well as Gabriel, M.: *Transcendental Ontology: Essays in German Idealism*. London/New York: 2011, especially the essay “Belated Necessity: God, Man, and Judgment in Schelling’s Late Philosophy” [cited henceforth as *Transcendental*

Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie, begun in 1846 and never fully completed,⁸ has Schelling attempt to map the three potencies onto the four causes of Aristotelian metaphysics, adding a fourth teleological element to the original potency triad. These various texts do not only give the *Potenzenlehre* different scopes, they also place them in completely different domains of operation: Schelling lets them unfold in nature (*Allgemeine Deduktion, Darstellung des Naturprozesses, Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*), in history, myth and religion (all this can be found to a certain extent in the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie, Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen, Weltalter*), as applied to the problem of freedom (*Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*), and to questions about the essence of God (*Andere Deduktion der Prinzipien der positiven Philosophie*, a shorter text from 1839). Furthermore, the potencies, insofar as they form a logical-ontological structure, could be used to answer certain questions of epistemology, as Wolfram Högrefe demonstrates in his book *Prädikation und Genesis*. All in all, the repetitive way in which Schelling proceeds about the *Potenzenlehre* appears unsystematic and confusing at a first glance. Why has Schelling begun his *Potenzenlehre* project anew multiple times? Why has he begun it so differently? The answer to this lies in understanding the *Potenzenlehre*; hence the first and perhaps greatest task of this work is to reconstruct the structure of Schelling's *Potenzenlehre*, as it appears in his last texts (mainly in the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* and the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie*), according to a reading as deflationary as it is possible, i.e. with minimal possible ontological and especially theological commitments.

Before I turn myself to this topic, some remarks are necessary regarding the iterative practice on beginning anew and on the status of *Potenzenlehre* as a whole. The Russian Schelling scholar Petr Rezvykh considers this iterative practice to be an important feature, perhaps even the point, of Schellingian philosophy. According to Rezvykh, Schelling aspires in all his works

Ontology] which relates the analysis of the potencies of the *Weltalter* with Schelling's discussion of unprethinkable being.

8 On this dating and the structure of the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* see Müller-Bergen, A.L.: "Karl Friedrich August Schelling und 'der Feder des seligen Vaters'. Editions-geschichte und Systemarchitektur der zweiten Abteilung von F.W.J. Schellings Sämtlichen Werken" in *Editio*, 21 (2007), pp. 110-132 and Schraven, M.: "Zu Schellings philosophischer Arbeit des Jahres 1848. Ein Blick in die Werkstatt des Philosophen". In Baumgartner, H.M., Jacobs, W.G. (Eds.): *Philosophie der Subjektivität? Zur Bestimmung des neuzeitlichen Philosophierens*, Band 2, Stuttgart/Band-Cannstatt: 1993, pp. 568-579. Horst Fuhrmann's claim that Schelling's son has ordered the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* wrongly and that the published *Darstellung* strays far from Schelling's original plan (Fuhrmann, H.: *Schellings letzte Philosophie. Die Negative und Positive Philosophie im Einsatz des Spätidealismus*. Berlin: 1940, p. 310, [cited henceforth *Schellings letzte Philosophie*]), can be put into question on the basis of these texts. For a discussion of the roles of Plato and Aristotle in the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* see Barbarić, D.: "Schellings Platon-Interpretation in der *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie*". In Adolphi, R.; Jantzen, J. (Eds.): *Das antike Denken in der Philosophie Schellings*, Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt: 2014, pp. 77-98.

(and especially in the later ones) towards expressing the inexpressible.⁹ The concepts of unprethinkable being, of *Ungrund*, of the “indivisible remainder” (“das nie aufgehende Rest”)¹⁰ refer to something which cannot be fully encompassed by thinking. This naturally does not necessarily mean here that they refer to the same “thing” or phenomenon, although, in fact, Jens Halfwassen straightforwardly identifies the unprethinkable with that which is “ungrounded”, i.e. that the ground of which is ungraspable.¹¹ The universal concept of the unconditioned also refers to something unencompassable, as young Schelling notes already in 1799 in the *Erster Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie*, something which is to be connected with every possible object of philosophy.¹² According to Rezykh, due to this necessary connection between the unconditioned and every possible object of philosophy, Schelling strives in his thought after the ultimately inexpressible, and hence the concept and method of the *Darstellung*, of the “presentation”, are very important to him. Furthermore, the various iterations of Schelling’s *Potenzenlehre* are attempts to present the unconditioned, to approach it or point towards it, without expressing it directly as such, for a direct attempt would surely fail. This task – to present the unconditioned without expressing it – helps us understand why Schelling insists upon beginning the *Potenzenlehre* anew time and time again. This constant new beginning is not due to Schelling being an unsystematic rebel (although he has indeed stressed the necessity of his system being open). It also is not due to Schelling’s alleged tendency to cobble together new philosophical concepts in the spirit of pure experimentation, without thinking these concepts through precisely, and then discarding them and starting anew after discovering their flaws (although it is indeed true that some elements of the *Potenzenlehre* have changed over time). The new beginnings are rather due to the fact that Schelling wants to approach the unconditioned from as many sides as possible and through as many paths as possible – in order to then present the unconditioned¹³ from as many sides as possible in as many ways as possible. His various attempts and new beginnings are thus to be seen as complementary and not at odds with one another. Through this repeated pointing towards the absolute, it is presented without being directly expressed – this, at least,

9 Rezykh, P.: “Govorit o nesказуемом: F. Schelling i problema vyrazhenia” („Говорить о несказуемом: Ф. Шеллинг и проблема выражения“). Talk from 28.03.2015.

10 SW VII, 360. For English, see Schelling, F. W. J.: *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom* (tr. Jeff Love and Johannes Schmit). New York: 2014. [henceforth *PI*], p. 29.

11 See Halfwassen, J.: *Der Aufstieg zum Einen. Untersuchungen zu Platon und Plotin*. Berlin: 2006, here p. 25 and 62. Note, however, that Halfwassen does use “unprethinkable” to mean “unthinkable” at least once in that book – see p. 162.

12 SW III, 11: “Welcher Gegenstand Objekt der Philosophie seyn soll, derselbe muß auch als *unbedingt* angesehen werden.” For English, see *First Outline for a System of the Philosophy of Nature*, trans. Keith R. Peterson. New York: 2004, p.10. [English cited henceforth as *First Outline*].

13 These various sides of the unconditioned look as if there are multiple unconditioned – not an anti-Schellingian proposition, as the unconditioned itself is, for Schelling, as we will see in what follows, is in a certain sense context-determined and relative to it.

is Schelling's intention. My more general thesis on the *Potenzenlehre* in relation to the unconditioned is that, if the general epithet "*Potenzenlehre*" is to have any meaning, as applied generally to Schelling's philosophical oeuvre, it is to be taken ideally as a certain whole – as an entangled network of concepts, always pointing beyond themselves and defining the space in this "beyond" as thoroughly as possible without encroaching on its unconditioned status.

Having made those preliminary remarks, it is time to turn to the literature on the *Potenzenlehre*, which is scant to the extreme. The *Potenzenlehre* in its latest form remains perhaps the most overlooked topic of Schelling scholarship. Researchers in large parts of the 20th century have largely been interested in the freedom-related and religious aspects of Schelling's late philosophy.¹⁴ Furthermore, the classical texts devoted to late Schelling attempt to divide Schelling's work into clearly separated periods, and this tendency is still very much alive today. Barbara Loer calls this, in her book *Die Absolute und die Wirklichkeit in Schellings Philosophie*, "merciless periodisation" ("erbarmungslose Periodisierung"), and discusses the culprits in some detail.¹⁵ She shows that Schelling's contemporaries have treated his oeuvre as continuous, and it was first in the works of Kuno Fischer¹⁶ and Eduard von Hartmann,¹⁷ that Schelling's works have been divided. Loer laments that this division has reached extreme proportions, with almost every Schelling text read as a wholly new beginning.¹⁸ This was cemented when Horst Fuhrmans and Walter Schulz, who have shaped the landscape of Schelling research in the second half of the previous century, divided Schelling's works into early philosophy and religious philosophy, insisting on a definitive split between them.¹⁹ Since the concept of potency, however, appears in Schelling's early writings already, it is quite difficult to understand this concept without referring to those earlier

14 For studies of Schelling's religious philosophy, see Kasper, W.: *Das Absolute in der Geschichte*. Freiburg/Breisgau: 2010, [cited henceforth as *Das Absolute in der Geschichte*]; Czuma, H.: *Der philosophische Standpunkt in Schellings Philosophie der Mythologie und Offenbarung*. Innsbruck: 1969; Danz, C.: *Die Philosophische Christologie F. W. J. Schellings*. Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt: 1996; Hermann, F.: *Die letzte Entlastung Vollendung und Scheitern des abendländischen Theodizeeprojektes in Schellings Philosophie*, Wien: 1994; or the classic study of Horst Fuhrmans: Fuhrmans, H.: *Schellings Letzte Philosophie. Die Negative und Positive Philosophie im Einsatz des Spätidealismus*. Berlin: 1940.

15 *Absolute und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 5-11.

16 Fischer, K. P.: *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie. Neue Gesamtausgabe, Bd. 6*. Heidelberg: 1895.

17 Von Hartmann, E.: "Schellings positive Philosophie als Einheit von Hegel und Schopenhauer". In *Philosophische Monatshefte*, 3 (Sommersemester 1869), pp. 273-334.

18 See *Absolute und Wirklichkeit*, p. 10 on the interpretation of Wilhelm Metzger.

19 On this topic, see *Schellings letzte Philosophie*, pp. 44-45, and *Absolute und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 14-15. Karl Jaspers argues on this point that all categorising attempts are in vain and that Schelling has attempted to encompass everything at every stage of his work. See Jaspers, K.: *Größe und Verhängnis*. München: 1955, p. 56, [cited henceforth *Größe und Verhängnis*].

writings – Xavier Tilliette supports this claim in his article “Die ‚höhere Geschichte“”.²⁰ Carlos Escobar Ramirez might have put it best recently when he wrote of Schelling’s philosophy as “ständige Entwicklung” – constant development, since that, according to Schelling, is what a philosopher – a profoundly temporal creature and a child of his time – should be in.²¹ This current work follows Tilliette’s intuition, and will take Schelling’s oeuvre to be largely continuous, with change and development, but no clear definitive breaks and radical abandonments of ideas. In this, I follow Tilliette, Loer and Iain Hamilton Grant, among many others, thus working from Walter Ehrhard’s claim that there is only one Schelling,²² illustrating this claim with examples and showing that the degree of consistency in Schelling’s work is quite high.²³ Schelling himself writes, in his lectures of 1827/28 on the *System der Weltalter*, that his philosophy is the development of its earlier seeds: “die Folgen meiner Philosophie, die ich jetzt vortragen werde[,] nur Entwicklungen der früheren Keime sind.”²⁴ In contrast to the various attempts at periodisation, Joachim Christian Horn identifies a further feature of Schelling’s *entire* thought, namely that which he calls speculative empiricism [“spekulativer Empirismus”].²⁵ This speculative empiricism is post-metaphysical, and produces its own objects by itself;²⁶ it is a kind of philosophising which operates on two levels. On one hand, it is an empiricism, hence treating experience as source of knowledge, but not in the direct or exclusive sense of the British empiricism, where experience is the sole source of knowledge, and rather due to the fact that the limits of experience correspond to the limits of reason: “wo die Erfahrung ein Ende hat, da erkennt [die Vernunft] auch ihre *eigene* Grenze”.²⁷ On the other hand, the objects of experience are not at all merely given for

20 Tilliette, X.: “Die ‚Höhere Geschichte“”, in Hasler, L. (Ed.): *Schelling. Seine Bedeutung für eine Philosophie der Natur und der Geschichte. Referate und Kolloquien der Internationalen Schelling-Tagung Zürich 1979*. Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt: 1981, pp. 193-204, here p. 194.

21 Ramirez Escobar, C.A.: *Reich und Persönlichkeit. Politisch und sittliche Dimensionen der Metaphysik in der Freiheitsschrift Schellings*. Berlin: 2015, pp. 18-19. [Cited henceforth as *Reich und Persönlichkeit*.]

22 Ehrhard, W.: “Nur Ein Schelling”. In Paetzold, H. und Schneider, H. (Eds.): *Schellings Denken der Freiheit. Festschrift Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik zum 70. Geburtstag*, Kassel: 2010, pp. 253-263. Walter Ehrhard, of course, did not intend to claim that Schelling’s writing all forms a systematic whole, and neither do I. He rather viewed Schelling’s work as needing to be interpreted hermeneutically as a whole.

23 See *Absolute in der Geschichte*, p. 10: “[I]n allen neuen Deutungen, so widersprüchlich sie sonst auch ausfallen, sich doch die Ansicht wohl allgemein durchgesetzt hat, dass die Konstanz im Denken Schellings durch alle Perioden seines Lebenswerkes hindurch viel größer ist, als bisher angenommen wurde.” English: “In all recent interpretations, however incompatible they otherwise are, there is generally the insight that the constancy in Schelling’s thought through all periods of his work is much greater than was assumed before.”

24 English: “The consequences of my philosophy, which I will report now, are only the development of its early seeds.” Quoted in Zaborowski, H.: “Geschichte, Freiheit, Schöpfung und die Herrlichkeit Gottes. Das ‚System der Freiheit‘ und die unaufhebbare Ambivalenz der Philosophie Schellings.” In Denker, A. and Zaborowski, H.: *System – Freiheit – Geschichte*, Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt: 2004, pp. 37-78, here p. 42. For more on this, see *ibid.* p. 48-52.

25 Horn, J.C.: “Zur Frage des spekulativen Empirismus bei Schelling.” In *Studia Leibnitiana* 3/3 (1971), pp. 213-223.

26 *Ibid.* p. 220

27 SW XIII, 102. English: “Where experience has its end, there [reason] encounters its own limit.”

Schelling, but are constituted, and the relation between subject and object in this speculative empiricism is dialectical. The periodisation narrative, however, on the whole, tends to prevail in the classical Schelling literature and unifying readings, like that of Horn, are a minority.

The early wave of Schelling reception has questioned the “success” of Schelling’s philosophy, although the criteria for success vary wildly from scholar to scholar, and are often not even defined.²⁸ Scholars have lamented the lack of systematicity and consistency in Schelling’s work.²⁹ Schelling’s negative philosophy, and all negative philosophy in general, has often been portrayed to be verging on evil, and positive philosophy provides an antidote to this evil insofar as (and only insofar as) it is based on religious faith. Sometimes even the antidote has been taken to fail: Dietrich Korsch takes the positive philosophy, to which he also ascribes the potencies, to not reach its target of grounding freedom through religion since the systematic dialectical nature of the potencies is at odds with historical contingency.³⁰ Some other thinkers have taken the other extreme: Emil Fackenheim, for instance, takes the positive philosophy to be an example of thinking metaphysically after Kant, and also laments its failure: it leads to the acceptance of contingency as a property of the world and of metaphysical speculation. This, however, according to Fackenheim, is impossible, as metaphysical speculation ought to be necessary. Fackenheim ignores the historicity of positive philosophy completely, making it out to be some sort of pure metaphysical a priori speculation.³¹ These are only some examples of the myriad of questionable readings, quite revealing as to how much could go awry in the field of Schelling interpretation. Yet another example of such questionable reading can be found in the work of Peter Oesterreich, who in his work on the *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen* takes Schelling’s project around 1810 to be pre-critically metaphysical,³² and the *Potenzenlehre* to be an anthropocentric instrument of pre-critical anthropology.³³ Oesterreich’s work, nevertheless, does not investigate the *Potenzenlehre* in detail, and this is not surprising, as the *Potzenlehre* is perhaps the least religious and most critical part of Schelling’s late philosophy, and the part which is convenient to ignore if the charges of “religious” or

28 Schelling’s earlier philosophy is also questioned. Rainer Adolphi, for instance, finds Schelling’s attempt to think nature as subject and to grasp actuality through this thinking to be a “naturalistic mysticism” (“Naturmystik”). See “Ontologie der Natur oder Theorie der wissenschaftlichen Erkenntnis?”. In Hattstein, M. (Ed.), *Erfahrungen der Negativität. Festschrift für Michael Theunissen zum 60. Geburtstag*, Hildesheim: 1992, pp. 131-152, here p. 140.

29 Karl Jaspers, for instance, remarks multiple times in his *Größe und Verhängnis*, that Schellingian philosophy has failed as a whole and at every stage, see *Größe und Verhängnis*, p. 59.

30 See Korsch, D.: *Der Grund der Freiheit. Eine Untersuchung zur Problemgeschichte der positiven Philosophie und zur Systemfunktion des Christentums im Spätwerk F.W.J. Schellings*. München: 1980.

31 Fackenheim, E. L.: “Schellings Begriff der positiven Philosophie”. In *Zeitschrift für Philosophische Forschung* 8/3 (1954) pp.321-335, here pp. 334-335.

32 See Oesterreich, P. L.: “Die Freiheit, der Irrtum, der Tod und die Geisterwelt. Schellings anthropologischer Übergang in der Metaphysik”. In Jantzen, J. and Oesterreich, P.L. (Eds.) *Schellings Philosophische Anthropologie*. Stuttgart/Bad Canstatt: 2002, here pp. 24-28 where Oesterreich describes the *Potzenlehre* as an attempt to renew metaphysics through purely rational construction.

33 Compare *ibid.* pp. 33-35.

“precritical” thinking are to be advanced against Schelling’s thought. The classical German reception of Schelling (Fuhmans, Schulz, Jaspers), on the other hand choose to largely ignore the *Potenzenlehre* as such. In order to not repeat the same analysis of the classics made time and time again, I direct the reader for more details to Markus Gabriel’s extensive literature review from *Mensch im Mythos*,³⁴ where the Fuhmans-Schulz debate is discussed in great detail, and will only remark here that Walter Schulz gives the potencies more attention than most, as he sees positive philosophy to be a project of reason, which discovers its own inconceivable ground and is faced with its inability to grasp this ground.³⁵ Against the backdrop of this general reading, potencies for Schulz are ontological forces as well as fundamental concepts of the absolute’s self-positing.³⁶ This reading is true to Schelling, but only because it is merely recapitulates what Schelling himself writes on the *Potenzenlehre* in the four books of *Philosophie der Mythologie* and the *Philosophie der Offenbarung*. Any deeper analyses of the *Potenzenlehre* are absent from the classics.

The classical Schelling literature, rarely discussing potencies as extensively as they should be discussed, defines them even less often – indeed, almost never. This is likely due to the various ways in which Schelling uses the terminology of the *Potenzenlehre* – the potencies are sometimes matter, form and the unity between them, sometimes three Gods in a mythology, and sometimes three epochs of the world. They have been, in literature, most often interpreted as modalities, as if they are Schelling’s replacement for three categories of modality in Kant.³⁷ And yet, the Kantian modalities reflect nothing ontological, and the potencies are not merely logical. The ontological aspect of the potencies renders it unlikely that they are merely categories of modality, although they are indeed tied to modality. In commentaries on ancient

34 Gabriel, M.: *Der Mensch im Mythos*. Berlin/New York: 2006, pp. 8-28 [cited henceforth as *MiM*]. Also see an exceptionally detailed literature review in Malte Krüger’s *Göttliche Freiheit*, which, among other things offers a good critique of Fuhmans’ and Schulz’s readings (*Göttliche Freiheit*, pp. 34-35).

35 Schulz, W.: *Die Vollendung des Deutschen Idealismus in der Spätphilosophie Schellings*. Stuttgart: 1955, pp. 6-8, [cited henceforth as *Vollendung des Deutschen Idealismus*]

36 See *ibid.* p. 14 und p. 190.

37 E.g. *Größe und Verhängnis*, p. 266; Müller-Bergen, A. L.; “Schellings Potenzenlehre der negativen Philosophie oder die zur Wissenschaft erhobene Kritik der reinen Vernunft”. In *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 113/2 (2006) pp. 271-295, here p. 288, [cited henceforth *Schellings Potenzenlehre*] (where the potencies are construed to be the possibility of possibility, possibility of actuality and the possibility of necessity). There are subtle readings that relate the potencies with modalities without identifying the two. One of those is the reading of Manfred Frank, who construes thinking as “projecting of the possible” and hence reads the potencies to be a model of interaction between thought and modality (Frank, M.: “Schelling’s Late Return to Kant.” In Ameriks, K., Rush, F. und Stolzenberg, J. (Ed.): *Internationales Jahrbuch des Deutschen Idealismus*, vol. 6: Romantik, Berlin/New York: 2009, pp. 23-58, here p. 29. [cited henceforth as *Late Return to Kant*]). Another such reading, one in which the potencies are not modalities, but their operation is tied to modality, can be found in Sandkühler, H. J.: “Natur und geschichtlicher Prozeß. Von Schellings Philosophie der Natur und der Zweiten Natur zur Wissenschaft der Geschichte.” In Sandkühler, H. J.: *Natur und geschichtlicher Prozeß. Studien zur Naturphilosophie F. W. J. Schelling*, Frankfurt/Main: 1986, pp. 13-82, here pp. 13-14. There Sandkühler writes on the Schellingian “philosophy of philosophy”, in the light of which Schelling develops a philosophy of genetic construction of all possibilities within philosophy (“genetische[...] Konstruktion allen innerhalb der Philosophie liegenden Möglichkeiten”).

influences on Schelling's thought, potencies are read in an Aristotelian manner: according to Oeser, for instance, they are elements of Aristotelian *dynamis*, all three without actuality, and they form the matter of the universal ("die Materie des Allgemeinen"),³⁸ insofar as the universal is thought of in terms of Aristotelian potency and actuality. A good definition of the potencies has been given by the theologian Klaus Hemmerle: the potencies are three fundamental and original concepts of thought ("drei Grund- und Urbegriffe des Denkens")³⁹ – this definition, however, focuses on the potencies' relation to thought and leaves out their ontological aspect.⁴⁰ Hemmerle himself improves on this definition when he identifies that which has being as that which is "pure openness before all predicates" ("reine Offenheit vor allen Prädikat[en]"),⁴¹ and thus connects predication and ontology. A similar definition, almost in the spirit of predication theory, is given by Robert Simon in his *Freiheit – Geschichte – Utopie*, where he writes that the unity of the potencies encompasses all that has being in all determinations ("alles Seiende in allen Bestimmungen umfasst"),⁴² and that potencies are the *ἀρχαί*, principles and conditions of spirit.⁴³

A further problematic moment pertaining to the *Potenzenlehre* in Schelling's late philosophy, in the way it is classically presented, is the apparent strong dichotomy between negative and positive philosophy.⁴⁴ The presentation of positive philosophy as overthrowing idealism and undermining the system ("Aufhebung des Idealismus", "Auflösung des Systems") because it discovers the impotency of reason ("Ohnmacht in der Macht der Vernunft")⁴⁵ raises the question of the relationship between the ideas of positive philosophy and the concepts developed in the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* and the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie*. It is easy to postulate a complete break between the *Potenzenlehre* and positive philosophy, but Schelling's persistent work on the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* raises the question: why was Schelling still developing negative philosophy if he had supposedly identified it as a dead-end and "moved on"? Fortunately, not all Schelling

38 Oeser, E.: *Die Antike Dialektik in der Spätphilosophie Schellings*. Wien: 1965, p. 74, [cited henceforth *Die Antike Dialektik*].

39 Hemmerle, K.: "Zum Verständnis der Potenzenlehre in Schellings Spätphilosophie" in *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 74/1 (1966) pp. 99-125, here p. 100, [cited henceforth *Zum Verständnis der Potenzenlehre*].

40 Another good definition of the Potenzenlehre (although focused on the ideal side of things) can be found in Schwarz, J.: "Die Lehre von Potenzen in Schellings Alterphilosophie". In *Kant-Studien* 40/1-2 (1935) pp. 118-148, here p. 123: Schwarz defines the potencies of the Identitätsphilosophie as "Seinsstufen verschiedener Ordnung" ("levels of being of different order") and those of the later texts "ideale Prinzipien, die dem Stufensystem des Universums seine allgemeine Struktur vorzeichnen" ("ideal principles which demonstrate the general structure of the universal to the system of its stages").

41 Ibid., p. 108.

42 Simon, R.: *Freiheit – Geschichte – Utopie. Schellings positive Philosophie und die Frage nach der Freiheit bei Kant*. München: 2014, p. 165, [cited henceforth as *Freiheit – Geschichte – Utopie*].

43 Ibid. p. 167.

44 See *Zum Verständnis der Potenzenlehre* and Theunissen, M.: "Die Aufhebung des Idealismus in der Spätphilosophie Schellings". In *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 83/1 (1976), p.1-29.

45 Ibid., pp. 5-6.

researchers take the easy way out. Michael Theunissen, for instance, speaks of the amphibolic character of the *Potenzenlehre* – the potencies are, according to him, employed in both philosophies.⁴⁶ This fact makes an adequate interpretation of the *Potenzenlehre* difficult, as it must be suited to both philosophies. I will pay special attention to this constraint when articulating an interpretation of the *Potenzenlehre* in this work.

In the more recent literature on Schelling, there has been increased attempts to cover more scholarly ground and discuss texts that have been overlooked in the Schelling reception from the first half of the 20th century. The attempts, however, are still limited. When it comes to texts dealing directly with the potencies, it is of course crucial to note Wolfram Högerebe's *Prädikation und Genesis* and Thomas Buchheim's *Eins von Allem* – those will receive detailed discussion both in this introduction and in the main body of text, but they are some of the only books engaging closely with the schema of the *Potenzenlehre* at great length. Another example, one which plays less of a role in this work, is John Elbert Wilson's *Schellings Mythologie*, which presents a thorough reading of the *Potenzenlehre* as applied to mythology and religion exclusively. Wilson's account presents the three potencies as a certain structure of modality, operating at both the level of God (-A and +A being the potency and actuality in God) and the creation (introducing -B and +B as the potency and actuality of the creation).⁴⁷ This work, while highly remarkable and with an extensive account of mythological themes in Schelling, will not be used in this text partly due to this notational move on Wilson's part – while Schelling's potencies can play out on multiple levels, God as well as creation, the introduction of a new -B/+B notation, which then nevertheless leads to $\pm A$ as its goal just like the -A/+A notation results in a confusing combination for this work, which prefers to restrict itself to notations Schelling had actually used.

There has also been a Schelling renaissance in anglophone scholarship, but despite it, the *Potenzenlehre* has largely been overlooked in the recent anglophone literature as well. Edward Allen Beach's *Potencies of God(s)*, while not very recent (it is a book from 1999) is the only English-language book on the *Potenzenlehre* out at the moment of this text being written. Like the title suggests, it is a study of the *Potenzenlehre*, mainly based on the *Philosophie der Mythologie* and the *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, and despite its virtues, it presents the *Potenzenlehre* as primarily applied to religion, and as such is an investigation of Schelling's religious (especially mythological) project, and not of the *Potenzenlehre* per se. Beach presents a detailed view of the *Potenzenlehre* as a system of principles of change, applied to

46 Ibid. p. 28-29.

47 Wilson, J.E.: *Schellings Mythologie. Zur Auslegung der Philosophie der Mythologie und der Offenbarung*. Stuttgart – Bad Canstatt: 1993, pp. 28-37.

mythological development and the interpretation of religious experience – the principles are hermeneutic as much as they are laws of change, thus demonstrating the advantage of not settling the issue of whether the potencies are on the ontological or epistemological side of method.⁴⁸ The versatility of the *Potenzenlehre*, in truth – the fact that Schelling applies it to almost anything and everything – is something which goes undiscussed in most of the literature. There are two great exceptions to the rule. The first is Vicki Müller-Lüneschloß, who acknowledges that potencies are a structure to be *applied* to a domain, and so she discusses them as applied to God in the *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*, and then as applied to both nature and the human being.⁴⁹ I will draw on her work *Über das Verhältnis von Natur und Geisterwelt* in part when the *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen* will briefly become the concern of this text in chapter V. The second exception is Marcela Garcia’s dissertation *The Significance of Aristotle in Schelling’s Last Philosophy*, which deals extensively with Schelling’s reception of Aristotle, but also systematically with the problem of the universal and the individual. In that text, Garcia discusses the machinery of the *Potenzenlehre* only insofar as it serves her purpose of investigating the way Schelling’s *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* is an engagement with Aristotle, but she nevertheless does discuss the first potency -A, identified by Schelling as matter, and argues that it is a function, a placeholder, the role of which can be played by many objects, since the notion of matter is relative.⁵⁰ I will elaborate on this in Chapter II. Garcia’s book is insightful and thought-provoking on the topics of the relationship between positive and negative philosophy, as well as on its discussion of the negative philosophy in general, so I will be coming back to it throughout this work. Returning to anglophone literature in general, it can be seen that, if it deals with late Schelling, it largely steers into the direction of the religious, previously completely unexplored in Anglophone literature, the psychoanalytic and the political. These works, perhaps, pay the best kind of homage to Schelling’s oeuvre: they take the *Potenzenlehre* as a tool to explore the issues they want to explore – but this is not the intent of *this* work, which will attempt to clarify the *Pontenzenlehre* as such, at the most general level,

48 Beach, E. A.: *The Potencies of the God(s): Schelling’s Philosophy of Mythology*. New York: 1993 [cited henceforth as *Potencies of God(s)*].

49 See Müller-Lüneschloß, V. *Über das Verhältnis von Natur und Geisterwelt. Ihre Trennung, ihre Versöhnung, Gott und den Menschen. Eine Studie zu F.W.J. Schellings „Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen“ (1810) nebst des Briefwechsels Wangenheim – Niederer – Schelling der Jahre 1809/1810*. Stuttgart – Bad Canstatt: 2012. [cited henceforth as *Natur und Geisterwelt*.] Müller-Lüneschloß discusses the application of the potency structure to God on pp. 158-160, claiming that this makes revelation possible. On pp. 194-203 she applies the potency scheme of the *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen* to nature (where the three potencies are gravity, light and organism), and on pp. 260-269 she applies it to the human, with the three potencies being “Gemüt, Geist und Seele” (mind, spirit, soul). Also note that she makes the move of subdividing the first potency of the human mind, the Gemüt, into three in turn (Sehnsucht, Begierde, Gefühl – longing, desire, feeling), a move which this work will mirror by claiming that potencies have further potencies of their own.

50 *Significance of Aristotle*, pp. 168-172.

as will be seen in what follows. Tyler Tritten's *Beyond Presence* interprets Schelling's late philosophy as giving a critique of modernity and the doctrines of presence, replacing them rather with an account of unfolding, a divine creation through the three potencies, called by Tritten "determinations of God", or rather modi of God's will.⁵¹ Another recent book, this time German and as to its thesis profoundly religious, is Malte Krüger's *Göttliche Freiheit*, a study of the trinity doctrine, the way it unfolds in Schelling's late philosophy, specifically the *Philosophie der Offenbarung*. However, despite its main theological thesis, Krüger's book takes negative philosophy, as well as the relationship between it and the positive, very seriously, treating the difference between positive and negative philosophies, among other things, in terms of two different relationships between the potencies and the absolute.⁵² The position of *Göttliche Freiheit* will be looked upon in some detail in chapters IV and V. As to the recent books on psychoanalysis and political thought, which use late Schelling's conceptual framework, three works mainly come to mind. First, there is Sean McGrath's provocative and highly original book *The Dark Ground of Spirit*, which engages in speculative psychology: it attempts to take a Schellingian look at the constitution and development of the self, putting forth a notion of dissociation based on Schelling's *Scheidung*, or the separation between ground and existence.⁵³ Matt Ffytche's *The Foundation of the Unconscious*, while a more historically-oriented study, is also worth mentioning – it traces the development of the concept of the unconscious from the early enlightenment to Schelling and his reception in Germany, Britain and France.⁵⁴ Schelling's contribution to forging the notion of the unconscious has been noticed in earlier works as well: Dieter Sturma, for instance, explores it in his *Habilitation, Philosophie der Person*.⁵⁵ Of works on eschatology and political philosophy, the recent work by Saitya Brata Das comes to mind, *The Political Theology of Schelling* – it uses both the positive and negative philosophies, claiming that they "belong-together"⁵⁶ – in order to think the separation of the world and God and the coming-towards the eschaton at the end of history to rectify this separation. To my mind, this profusion of works and discussions, all using Schelling's late philosophy, all claiming to find their arguments and the problems they pose already in Schelling's thought, points primarily to one thing, namely to the versatility of Schelling's late philosophy, manifested in the applicability of the *Potenzenlehre* to any topic or domain. This leads me to stress, once again, the need to examine

51 Tritten, T.: *Beyond Presence. The Late F.J.W. Schelling's Criticism of Metaphysics*. Berlin: 2012, see especially pp. 114-118 and 177-187.

52 *Göttliche Freiheit*, pp. 14-15.

53 McGrath, S.J.: *The Dark Ground of Spirit. Schelling and the Unconscious*. London: 2012.

54 Ffytche, M.: *The Foundation of the Unconscious. Schelling, Freud and the Birth of the Modern Psyche*. Cambridge: 2011.

55 Sturma, D.: *Philosophie der Person*. Paderborn: 1997.

56 Brata Das, S.: *The Political Theology of Schelling*. Edinburgh: 2016, p. 45.

the framework of Schelling's late philosophy, specifically the *Potenzenlehre*, as a tool, "in-itself", and to see how it operates at the most abstract level, so that this could shed light on its various applications. Such a study, as far as I know, has not been undertaken until this work.

More recent Schelling literature also pays special attention to Kant's deep influence on Schelling, without which understanding the *Potenzenlehre* is quite difficult – although Kant's influence on Schelling has been remarked upon in the classical texts as well.⁵⁷ Schelling accepts Kant's idea of the facticity of reason – he takes it as fact that there is reason and seeks to investigate its operations and uncover its conditions.⁵⁸ Furthermore, Schelling's philosophy was heavily influenced by Kant's transcendental dialectic, and it is architectonic in the sense that the whole is not constituted by its parts, but the parts are rather determined by the whole.⁵⁹ Michaela Boenke writes that Schelling's goal is an exegesis of Kant's philosophy, beginning from the highest perspective ("von der höchsten Perspektive").⁶⁰ This exegesis begins in Schellings earliest writings,⁶¹ and lasts throughout his career, so that there are 1200 mentions of and references to Kant in the *Sämtliche Werke*.⁶² The *Potenzenlehre*, too, is an attempt to answer the questions of Kantian philosophy and present the potencies as naturalised transcendental principles – although the potencies are, of course, not judgements.⁶³ Schelling's late philosophy itself is, perhaps against the first impressions, heavily influenced by Kant – the difference between negative philosophy and the positive has its root in the Kantian claim that existence is not a real predicate.⁶⁴ This constant Kantian influence is also an argument for the continuity of Schelling's thought, and will be discussed in the first chapter of this work, as preparation for the investigation of the *Potenzenlehre*. Schelling's Kantianism leads us to claim, with Daniel Whistler,⁶⁵ that subject and object are both doubled in Schelling's

57 Among others, Fuhrmans and Schulz do it themselves: see *Schellings Letzte Philosophie*, p. 124f, 297f, and *Die Vollendung des Deutschen Idealismus*, p. 36-42.

58 Gabriel, M.: "Schellings Antwort auf die Grundfrage der Metaphysik in der *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung*". In Schubbe, D.; Lemanski, J. und Hauswald, R. (Eds.): *Warum ist überhaupt etwas und nicht vielmehr nichts?* Hamburg: 2013, pp. 159-188, here p. 163 [cited henceforth as *Antwort auf der Grundfrage*].

59 Compare Breidbach, O.: "Über die Voraussetzungen eines Reduktionismus. Zur Aktualität des Schellingschen Naturbegriffs." In Baumgartner, H.M., Jacobs, W.G. (Ed.): *Philosophie der Subjektivität? Zur Bestimmung des neuzeitlichen Philosophierens*, Band 2, Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt: 1996, pp. 373-381.

60 Boenke, M.: *Transformation des Realitätsbegriffs. Untersuchungen zur frühen Philosophie Schellings im Ausgang von Kant*. Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt: 1990, pp. 164-165.

61 On early Schelling's Kantianism, see Sandkühler, H. J.: *Idealismus in praktischer Absicht. Studien zu Kant, Schelling und Hegel*. Frankfurt/Main: 2013, p. 61-63.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 59.

63 Compare on this point *Die Antike Dialektik*, p. 67. Dieter Sturma also writes that Schelling develops a naturalistic prehistory of subjectivity ("naturalistische Vorgeschichte der Subjektivität") in his work - Sturma, D.: "Die Odyssee des Geistes. Schellings Projekt einer naturphilosophischen Geschichte des Selbstbewusstseins". In Baumgartner, H.M., Jacobs, W.G. (Ed.): *Philosophie der Subjektivität? Zur Bestimmung des neuzeitlichen Philosophierens*, Band 2, loc. cit., pp. 580-590, here p. 582.

64 See *Late Return to Kant*, pp. 32-33.

65 Daniel Whistler in his text "Schelling's Doctrine of Abstraction" makes the important point that already in the *Naturphilosophie* the concepts of subjectivity and objectivity are doubled for Schelling. Hence, for

philosophy. Schelling's attempts to ground transcendental structures in nature, together with a Kantian legacy, drive him towards a conception of nature according to which the nature we think is partly constituted by us. Schelling distances himself from Kant's concept of nature as the sum of all phenomena and takes it to be "the constructed itself" ("das Konstruierte selbst").⁶⁶ Despite this, the claims which Schelling makes about nature in the framework of his philosophy are not pre-critical, as they are not claims about that nature which has grounded our cognition, as it is in itself. This first level is nature as unconditioned, as absolute productivity, as *natura naturans*. This nature is potentiated to first produce organic nature and then man – organic beings and man are both, in this sense, "natural". The second level of nature is the nature constituted and determined by the subject, constructed through reason and understanding as soon as human beings experience nature. This understanding and experiencing is a natural activity (since nature experiences itself in the course of this operation), but the experienced nature is not the same as the nature-it-itself, although it is part of the task of philosophy to give an account of the generation of thinking and subjectivity from nature – as Dieter Sturma puts it, there is a naturphilosophical history of self-consciousness:

Es ist Schellings grundsätzliche und in allen Stadien seines Denkens vertretene These, daß Subjektivität sich selbst nicht durchsichtig werden kann, wenn sie in der Immanenz der Reflexion verbleibt. Deshalb entwickelt er in einer naturphilosophischen ‚Geschichte des Selbstbewußtseins‘ die naturalistischen Extensionen der Subjektivität. Anders als der erkenntniskritische Dualismus der Transzendentalphilosophie nahelegt, steht in dieser Geschichte das in der äußeren Reflexion Gegebene der Subjektivität nicht gegenüber, sondern tritt als sichtbare Manifestation ihrer Geschichte auf. Selbstbewußtsein ist für Schelling der zumindest vorläufige Endpunkt der sich entwickelnden Natur.⁶⁷

It is by now widely agreed upon that German idealism is beyond the standard realism-idealism dichotomy, where "realism" is the position that reality is different in kind from mind, and "idealism" is the position that mind and reality are not different. Sturma credits Schelling specifically for following a "third path" away from the pitfalls of previous philosophical

instance, the subjective is either subjective in-itself (nature) or subjective for consciousness. See "Schelling's Doctrine of Abstraction." In *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy* 26 (2014) p. 58-81, here p. 74.

66 Heuser, M. L.: "Schellings Organismusbegriff und seine Kritik des Mechanismus und Vitalismus." In *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 14/2 (1989) pp. 17-36, here p. 19.

67 Sturma, D.: "Schellings Subjektivitätskritik". In *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, 44 (1996) 3, 429-446, here p. 430. English translation: "It is Schelling's fundamental thesis, one that appears in all stages of his thought, that subjectivity cannot become transparent to itself if it remains in the immanence of reflection. Thus he develops, in a *naturphilosophische* 'history of self-consciousness', the naturalistic extensions of subjectivity. Contrary to what the dualism of transcendental philosophy, critical of knowledge, supposes, in this history the given in outer reflection is not opposed to subjectivity, but appears as the visible manifestation of its history. Self-consciousness, for Schelling, is the at least provisional endpoint of the self-developing nature." Here and henceforth, unless specified otherwise all English translations of German block quotes in the text are mine.

positions.⁶⁸ The complexity of German idealism with respect to this topic is perhaps best presented in a recent book by Valentin Pluder, *Die Vermittlung von Idealismus und Realismus in der Klassischen Deutschen Philosophie*, where through a close reading of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, Pluder argues that in German idealism, realism and idealism are both taken together, integratively.⁶⁹ Hence Schelling's philosophy is an ontoepistemology, binding ontology and epistemology and investigating them together. It is important to remark at this point that when Schelling uses the concept of nature in his work, he is referring to this entire doubled complex of first and second levels of nature. This is how the concept of nature will be used also in this work.⁷⁰ The human subject is similarly doubled: it is on one hand a natural being and on the other – a being which determines itself through itself. In light of this doubled nature and Schelling's special caution not to fall into pre-critical metaphysics, the plausibility of Kantian readings of the *Potenzenlehre* is not at all surprising. The idea of the potencies as principles of thinking being, which Schelling adheres to himself, is, according to Anna-Lena Müller-Bergen, the result of a thorough engagement with the Transcendental Dialectic: "das Resultat einer konsequent durchgeführten, spekulativen Aufarbeitung des methodisch-systematischen Duktus der Kantischen Vernunftkritik, insbesondere der *Transzendentalen Dialektik* [...]"⁷¹. According to Müller-Bergen, Schelling attempts to ground the ideas of reason through potencies, to present the way they are discovered, and hence to answer the question of how exactly the rules for constructing syllogisms are formed. The key here is Schelling's idea that thinking is also experience, and that reason receives its principles passively through experiencing thinking.⁷² As we have mentioned above, these parallels to Kantian philosophy will be explored in what follows.

Despite the relative obscurity of the *Potenzenlehre* – or perhaps precisely because of it, the very few existing books on it are thorough, original and highly enlightening, and I now turn to discussing them. This work will pay special attention to Wolfram Högbe's *Prädikation und Genesis*, discussing it in detail in chapter II. Högbe's book focuses on what is perhaps

68 Sturma, D.: "The Nature of Subjectivity. The Critical and Systematic Function of Schelling's Philosophy of Nature". In Sedgwick, pp. (Ed.): *The Reception of Kant's Critical Philosophy. Fichte, Schelling and Hegel*. Cambridge: 2000, pp. 216-231, here p. 217. [cited henceforth as *Nature of Subjectivity*].

69 See Pluder, V.: *Die Vermittlung von Idealismus und Realismus in der Klassischen Deutschen Philosophie. Eine Studie zu Jacobi, Kant, Fichte, Schelling und Hegel*. Stuttgart – Bad Canstatt: 2013, pp. 551-552 for Pluder's formulation of the claim that German idealism is beyond the realism-idealism dichotomy, p. 554 for Pluder's take on consciousness, characterised by it being both coinciding with reality and different from it, and p. 595 for the integrative approach German idealism takes towards this problematic.

70 Indeed, this is what Gabriel means when he writes: "Die Wirklichkeit ohne Gedanken ist unvollständig, jedenfalls dann, wenn es Gedanken gibt." ["Reality without thoughts is incomplete, at any rate when thoughts exist".] - *Antwort auf der Grundfrage*, p. 173.

71 *Schellings Potenzenlehre*, p. 272. English: "[it is] the result of a consistently worked out, speculative reworking of the methodical-systematic characteristics of the Kantian critique of reason, especially the *Transcendental Dialectic* [...]"

72 *Ibid.*, 283.

Schelling's darkest work – the unfinished *Weltalter*, setting aside its God- and creation-centred rhetoric and reading the text, among other things, as a text on predication theory. Such a project stands in agreement with Schellingian ontology, and even with his *Naturphilosophie*-based experiments, since Schellingian epistemology (which is only implicit in his works) can only be a cosmological epistemology, echoing the universe, i.e., as Högbe puts it, “daß die Weltentstehung ein Echo in unserer Welterkenntnis hat.”⁷³ This means that the world has an “autoepistemic structure” – that it comes to know itself through the cognitive capacities of human beings.⁷⁴ Högbe himself formulates it as follows: “die Welt hat die Eigenschaft, daß es Erkenntnis der Welt gibt” and “die Welt erkennt sich selbst”⁷⁵ (so, the world has a property to discover itself, because knowledge of the world is itself a property of the world). Hence, investigating processes of emergence and becoming should mirror our cognitive processes. This is a recurring theme in Schelling scholarship, with Dieter Sturma going forth perhaps most explicitly naturalistically, and claiming that “our knowledge of nature can only arise because nature is an organism and because the principle that lies at the basis of nature is the same as that which lies at the basis of ourselves.”⁷⁶ Högbe begins his book with Kant's doctrine of the transcendental ideal as ground of predication (the object of all predication, predicative protoplasm).⁷⁷ According to the Schellingian critique (which will also be examined in detail in chapter I), the transcendental ideal as presented by Kant is an insufficient ground. To put it briefly: the ideal is merely an idea, and an idea cannot be ground of predication and ideation according to Schelling. The transcendental ideal must hence be ontologised in order to ground predication. It is worth mentioning in connection to this that epistemology, for Schelling as it is for Högbe, can never be separated from ontological questions about the process of man's search for knowledge. Hence Högbe takes the *Potenzenlehre* of the *Weltalter* – the schema of three potencies -A, +A and ±A, active in processes of generation and becoming – and defines these potencies as “predicative elements” (“prädikativen Elementarteilchen”). I will consider this exact schema of the *Potenzenlehre* (more broadly as a structure of determination, and also as a theory of predication) in chapter II, but it is important to remark now already that for Högbe the potencies are placeholders for everything that can be the case: “Platzhalter für alles das, was der Fall sein kann”,⁷⁸ and that this schema hence

73 Högbe, W.: *Prädikation und Genesis. Metaphysik als Fundamentalheuristik im Ausgang von Schellings „Die Weltalter“*. Frankfurt/Main: 1989, p. 43, [cited henceforth as P&G]. English: “[...] that the emergence of the world has an echo in our knowledge of the world.”

74 Ibid. p. 51. compare Frank, M.: *Das Unendliche Mangel am Sein. Schellings Hegelkritik und die Anfänge der Marxschen Dialektik*. (2. Auflage). München: 1992, p. 193, [cited henceforth as *Unendliche Mangel*].

75 P&G, p. 52. English: “[T]he world has the property that there is knowledge of the world” and “the world comes to know itself”.

76 *Nature and Subjectivity*, p. 222.

77 Ibid., p. 65.

78 Ibid., p. 73.

envelops all possibilities.⁷⁹ In other words: everything that can happen, no matter what ontic or ontological sphere it belongs to, can be analysed through the schema of the potencies as to its generation and its effects. The *Potenzenlehre* is Schelling's philosophical "omni-tool". It can of course also be applied outside philosophy of predication (e.g. in *Naturphilosophie* – hence one of Schelling's latest texts about the *Potenzenlehre*, the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*, treats among other things, the emergence of space and time, questions of matter and embodiment, questions of magnetism, et.c.) However, remaining with predication for now will be more convenient: according to Högrefe's Schelling, it has the following structure: "das, was A ist und das, was B ist, ist einerlei".⁸⁰ Högrefe translates it as follows:

- 1 a=x
- 2 Fx
- 3 Fa

There is something (a), and a determination (F) – together they constitute a proposition (Fa). This schema remains merely a logical formal structure. The particular difficulty of Schelling's philosophy – a difficulty which is simultaneously its advantage – lies in the fact that Schelling never really specifies whether what he is doing in the *Potzenlehre* is a form of transcendental philosophy or whether he is actually engaging with ontological questions. On one hand, Schelling is undoubtedly post-Kantian through and through, since he explicitly accepts Kant's insight into the functioning of human cognition and that into the impossibility of engaging in metaphysics (although he has also pointed out the limitations of Kantian philosophy).⁸¹ One must, even when thinking about nature, keep in mind that the nature thought is not the nature which somehow exists independent from thinking: the for-us is not the in-itself. On the other hand, Schelling is a deeply ontological thinker. As I have already mentioned, the *Potzenlehre* is a logical and epistemological structure as well as an ontological one; the potencies are, according to a very accurate expression of Joachim Holz, constitutive of consciousness – "bewusstseinsbildend".⁸² According to Hermann Schrödter's

79 It should be remarked here that although the potencies are not modalities (in the sense that -A, +A and ±A do not correspond to the three modalities possibility, actuality and necessity), the structure of the potencies constitutes the modal structure of actuality. Compare Franz, A.: *Philosophische Religion. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit den Grundlegungsproblemen der Spätphilosophie F.W.J. Schellings*. Würzburg/Amsterdam: 1992, p. 223, [henceforth cited as *Philosophische Religion*].

80 P&G, p. 81. English: "That which is A and that which is B are the same".

81 See e.g. SW XIII, 145-146.

82 Compare Holz, H.: *Spekulation und Faktizität. Zum Freiheitsbegriff des mittleren und späten Schelling*. Bonn: 1970, p. 216, [henceforth cited as *Spekulation und Faktizität*]. For an additional discussion of the logical-ontological status of the potencies, see *Philosophische Religion*, p. 217.

analysis of the potencies, they are simultaneously possibilities, powers and “moments” of being, in accordance with which we think being.⁸³ For Schelling, the processes of thought mirror processes of being because thinking is part of the world, and part of nature. These interpretations, while most consistent with the spirit and letter of Schelling’s texts, make Schelling’s philosophy particularly difficult to access. It is not easy to understand that its topic is neither nature nor transcendental structures, but *both together, at the same time* – both are addressed in the same texts and the same theories, due to their complementarily constituting complexity. This is confirmed in the works Iain Hamilton Grant, another philosopher and Schelling scholar whose work is extremely important for this project. His views on the emergence of thought warrant special attention. Grant’s works take into account and develop the aforementioned double-levelled nature of Schelling’s theories, also in application to the *Potenzenlehre*:

The second register of the question therefore arises by countering the assumption that the *produced* nature of WW [*Whole World, the world as lying in the nets of reason - DK*⁸⁴] entails that it is an artefact of reason. We have already noted the manner in which the emergence of a judgment constitutes the multiplication of the subject of that judgment. [...] WW is not derived from the *partition* of nature so much as from its *multiplication*, nature’s augmentation by the dimension of the concept. The truth of reason, so to speak, that the subject of the proposition is not logically identical with, or the same thing as, the referent of that proposition, coincides with the truth of fact that the nature there is has as one of its consequences the making of judgments within it. It is the consequent nature of the consequent that makes the antecedent necessarily insurmountable by it.⁸⁵

We see here that Grant supports the reading of Schelling according to which there are two levels of nature – the nature as it is in itself, and the nature which is constituted by our conceptual activity. Since Grant recognises this Schellingian ambivalence with respect to the transcendental philosophy and ontology, he uses his book *Philosophies of Nature after Schelling* to explain precisely that, which Hogebe has left out in *Prädikation und Genesis* – the fact that the transcendental conditions of our cognition are not merely speculative conditions, but rather natural conditions.⁸⁶ Grant’s thesis problematises the methodological move of *Prädikation und Genesis*: the claim that speculative metaphysics is to remain independent from epistemological discoveries, since it is to take the role of fundamental heuristic, *Fundamentalheuristik*. Grant points out that the transcendental must be naturalised, i.e. a chain of transcendental argumentation is to be followed until the transcendental is

83 Compare *Grundlagen der Lehre*, pp. 569-575.

84 See SW X, 143.

85 Grant, I. H.: “How nature came to be thought. Schelling's paradox and the problem of location”. In: *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 44/1 (2013) pp.24-43, here p. 27, [cited henceforth as *Nature Thought*].

86 Nature is at least a condition because we cannot but submit to it – certain natural conditions have determined us as a species and natural catastrophes can destroy those conditions and us.

grounded in nature; the transcendental products become natural products, exactly like human thought, which functions on this natural and transcendental basis. Nature plays an extraordinarily great role in Schelling's thought almost at all its stages – I take here as a demonstrative example the first draft of the *Weltalter*; an “anthropological” and allegedly anthropocentric text about God, where Schelling writes: “[d]enn wo Wirklichkeit ist, da ist Natur”.⁸⁷ This Schellingian nature is, ultimately, the subject, because it is that which thinks through humans.⁸⁸ Due to this special character of nature thinking itself, it is according to Schelling and Grant a mistake to assume that nature is merely the sum of all appearances. Importantly, the transcendental subject for Grant is also a part of nature, as its original existence precedes its transcendental functions. For Grant and Grant's Schelling, nature is pure productivity, and everything which is somehow produced is, due to the identity between productivity and products, a part of nature:

The subject of nature thus consists in the constantly reiterated identity of productivity and product: since productivity is indissociable from product (without which it would not be productivity, but a force with no effect, and therefore not a force at all), but since it is not reducible to any product or totality of products, the asymmetry of the identity is maintained only through constant productivity. Thus, as the Introduction to the Outline states, ‘the product of productivity is a new productivity’ (III, 324; 2004: 231); in other words, nature as subject is self-recapitulating at different levels.⁸⁹

As the above quote says, nature “self-recapitulates” at different levels: for Grant too, nature thinks itself through humans. Human experience has different transcendental structures as its conditions, but these same structures have within themselves further origins and conditions – they have arisen in this world, in this nature, in specific organisms and kinds of organisms. This is an insight Schelling comes to early on in his thought, and it is perhaps best phrased by Rudolf Brandner who points out Schelling's critique of transcendental philosophy: it, according to Brandner's Schelling, has a concept of the *being* of subjectivity which doesn't itself have a transcendental status, and so it cannot account for the genesis of that concept – this becomes the role of the *Naturphilosophie*.⁹⁰ Be that as it may, it would be nonsense to claim that transcendental structures arise and are somehow independent of the natural process which has produced human beings, since this claim would leave whoever makes it in the clasp

87 WA I, 79. English: “Where is actuality, there is nature”.

88 See Grant, I. H.: “Eternal and Necessary Bond Between Philosophy and Physics”. In: *Angelaki* vol.10/1 (2005) pp.43-59, here p. 51, [cited henceforth as *Eternal and Necessary Bond*]: “Finally, the dichotomy collapses because logos and bios are the elements of species man [...]”.

89 Ibid., p. 170.

90 See Brandner, R.: *Natur und Subjektivität. Zum Verständnis des Menschseins im Anschluß an Schellings Grundlegung der Naturphilosophie*. Würzburg: 2002, p. 73. Brandner's work is interesting in that his little book argues that in order to give a sufficient account of freedom, we have to, along with Schelling, leave behind mere reflection or thinking about thinking and turn to nature.

of a dualism.⁹¹ And yet, the relation between transcendental structures and nature is, at any rate, far more complicated than a one-sided grounding. Nature before thought, the so to speak “prethinkable” nature, generates thinking which in turn produces a conceptual picture of nature.⁹² This generates a second, conceptual nature, which however is not the nature-in-itself independent from thought; the conceptual parts of nature are furthermore, according to Grant, not simply ideal fictions, but parts of nature in the full-fledged sense, since they are produced out of nature and take part in further production processes. However, this does not mean that the basic (in whatever sense) units of nature are inaccessible to us and that an investigation into the origin of our cognitive faculties is hopelessly flawed – such an investigation is merely always a re-construction, and not an arbitrary construction (the “re” in re-construction is important here). Hence: we discover facts about our past,⁹³ but we do not discover them as if they had never taken place – this would have been impossible. The “problem of access”, addressed by Quentin Meillassoux,⁹⁴ is already framed differently for Schelling: it is no longer a problem of two fields (subject and the in-itself) which do not overlap, but a problem of infinite fields, nested within each other, affecting each other – fields in which nature determines thought, which then determines nature, which then determines thought, etc. Grant describes this nestedness nicely in his article “Universe in the Universe”:

91 “Schellingianism is resurgent every time philosophy reaches beyond the Kant-inspired critique of metaphysics, its subjectivist-epistemological transcendentalism, and its isolation of physics from metaphysics. It is precisely because this latter, in particular, has constituted an unacknowledged two-worlds metaphysics for the present age, that Schellingian naturephilosophy remains not only ‘exemplary’, but a definitive problematic for contemporary postkantian metaphysics.” – *Philosophies of Nature*, p. 5.

92 Grant writes on this as follows: “A proposition therefore minimally introduces a locality, a position into what, according to the hypothesis, was without one. The being consequent upon the judgment is accordingly not identical to the being antecedent to it, since a logical space has now formed in which the subject of the proposition is a creature of that proposition. The primary division of being effected by the judgment is insuperably its multiplication. [...It is the *whole* world (WW) that reason captures and there is more than reason in the world (W). But if W contains “more” than WW, then either reason, being part of W, does not for that reason contain WW and the statement simply contradicts itself, or the wholeness of the world is an artefact of the reason that contains it, so that the “whole world” is *less than* the world, an abstraction from it, perhaps.” See more in *Nature Thought*, p. 27.

93 “A concept is not a thing, an object, nor an abstract container, but a form of movement overcoming its beginning in pursuit of the history of which it is consequent.” – *Universe in the Universe*, p. 19.

94 See Meillassoux, Q.: *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*. New York: 2010. Meillassoux’s book is an attempt to build an ontology of contingency. Meillassoux problematises those kinds of philosophy which accept the critical separation between phenomena and things-in-themselves – he names such thinking “correlationism”. Kant, German idealism and phenomenological tradition, as well as post-structuralism, postmodernism and deconstruction are all “correlationist”, because in all those kinds of philosophising we only have access to the correlation between thinking and reality, not to reality itself (p. 5). This is Meillassoux’s “problem of access”. Meillassoux then tries to demonstrate that within the framework of a correlationism, there can be no claims made about the world as it were prior to the existence of human beings. This means that according to Meillassoux statements made about palaeontology or physical theories concerning the Big Bang are meaningless (p. 13). In order to avoid this problematic conclusion, we need access to an absolute reality, and Meillassoux claims that he has discovered a means of such access. By means of a long argument (pp. 55-60) he comes to the conclusion that the only absolute which is still allowed, which does not make a philosopher into a dogmatist, is absolute contingency.

[T]he access problem that bedevils transcendental philosophy and epistemology is inverted. The access problem is this: to what have we access if the form under which all representation is for us is insuperable? If, that is, no access-instance, since it would be our access-instance, can be independent of our makings, doings or expressings, then this must also apply to the objects we access – that we represent – since if it did not, this would disqualify the instance as one of access. While such a problem may be resolved by retreating ever further (or ever higher) into the orders of reference within a domain constituted as without an outside, this postpones, rather than resolves, the issue. For this reason, the access problem is ultimately a problem of how an ontology may be derived from an order of reference that is not ultimate but infinitely nested.⁹⁵

We should however examine this reciprocal determination of subject and object further, otherwise we still risk denying the existence of nature (Grant calls such denial “antiphysics”⁹⁶) and fall into one-sided grounding, positing nature as a sheer product of our faculties once again. *Prädikation und Genesis* itself contains a kind of antiphysics, since the speculative fundamental heuristic which is the focus of this work is independent of empirical circumstances (even though Högrefe accepts that the world which it itself thinks *is!*). The transcendental question after the becoming of our thought remains unanswered in *Prädikation und Genesis*. It is however important to note that the fundamental heuristic described in *Prädikation und Genesis* is not necessarily dependant on the “second” nature, on the conceptual image of nature; it rather appears to ground this image. This same speculative heuristic is, though, dependant on the “first”, producing nature. Since thinking produces further elements (natural as well as conceptual⁹⁷) in its wake, a reciprocal determination arises between thinking and nature. This interpenetration of nature and thought should be dealt with in order to make Schelling’s argumentation visible.

For Grant, everything is nature, and nature is neither a thing nor a set of things, but a dynamic process. This process of natural production is “unconditioned” or “ungrounded” in two directions, i.e. incomplete.⁹⁸ This means that the natural process has no end and will continue indefinitely, but also that it has no real beginning. This work borrows this insight from Grant’s reading of Schelling and applies it to the potency chain. Each phenomenon, each local process and each event has some ground, which is also a natural product. This “natural chain” repeats itself further and further, at least at the level of our thinking. For Grant, however this

95 *Universe in the Universe*, p. 307.

96 See *Philosophies of Nature*, p. 59ff.

97 “Concepts are consequent upon the nature of which they are, *qua* concepts, late expressions.” – *Nature Thought*, p. 25.

98 Grant writes on this incomplete process, among other places, in *Eternal and Necessary Bond* (p. 54): “The second solution concerns Schelling’s constant search for the “unconditioned in nature”: to the extent that this is a possible programme, there can be no guarantee that the unconditioned has been reached. Accordingly, the transcendental would again lack conditions of closure, and would instead open onto sequences of unconditioning that carry the entire process back beyond the envelope of the second of the twofold series in which transcendental philosophy consists, and into naturephilosophy itself.”

“ungroundedness” is not merely epistemological, but also ontological – it demonstrates the status of nature as unconditioned.⁹⁹

I am in agreement with many aspects of Grant’s work, but the focus of this current text does not lie in an investigation of nature. Hence, this work will not consider the unconditioned natural process as a whole and will not attempt to disentangle the reciprocal action between the nature which has produced us and the nature we produced. It is instead my intention to, while examining and reconstructing the *Potenzenlehre*, also consider the *Potenzenlehre*’s natural roots, as well as the predicative operation “x is y” with regard to its emergence and its being a process. It is less important to this text to ask the question of whether the processes investigated in it should be called natural; it is rather more important to understand the *effects* of these processes. It is not at all my intention, like it is Grant’s, to present and defend a maximally extensive idea of nature. I do, however, accept that there is an unconditioned chain of becoming that begins in nature, which, among other things, operates in human thought and hence in predication, and arises out of something non-human, whether this non-human element be called nature or not. It can be seen that this is a theme that takes root very early in Schelling’s work: for a discussion of this, see Hans-Peter Kunz’s recent book *Unendlichkeit und System*, which surveys mathematics in Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie*.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, it is also important for this text to keep in mind that the scope of the *Potenzenlehre*, due to the multiplicity of domains Schelling himself applies it to, is maximally broad: the *Potenzenlehre* expresses a structure of determination, both conceptual as well as natural/ontological. This ontological structure of determination – the natural side of the *Potenzenlehre* – is the ground of fundamental heuristic as it was presented in *Prädikation und Genesis*. In my search after this ground, I intend to investigate the potency schema, which Schelling has discovered and presented as the universal schema of natural process, as dynamic, to make its becoming and the interaction of its elements clear. This schema will first be considered abstractly and then,

99 We must take nature as the unconditioned, reiterates Grant: “If *what a given species thinks or can think* about nature were the limit of Schelling’s naturephilosophy, then it would be simply a prototype of recent naturalized epistemologies. Moreover, the philosophy of the unconditioned would then be conducted under the strict conditions imposed upon it by the neurophysiological constraints specific to that species, and would therefore a priori fail to be an unconditioned philosophy, forming instead just another conditioned philosophy of the unconditioned, with false a priori furnished a posteriori according to empirically discovered species-specific physiological and/or ideational constraints, as opposed, say, to Kant’s transcendently deduced critical laws. If, in other words, ‘to philosophise about nature means to create nature’, the latter cannot be a nature restricted a priori by the particular physiological means by which it philosophizes.” – *Philosophies of Nature*, p. 2, also see p. 109.

100 For Kunz’s Schelling, nature is *a priori*, and yet, as Kunz correctly note, the notion of *a priori* for Schelling is very different than it is for Kant. See Kunz, H.-P.: *Unendlichkeit und System. Die Bedeutung des Unendlichen in Schellings früheren Schriften und in der Mathematik*. Heidelberg: 2013, pp. 95-98 [cited henceforth as *Unendlichkeit und System*]. Among other things, Kunz discusses Schelling’s famous passage from SW III, 278 about how the difference between *a priori* and *a posteriori* does not lie in the sentences themselves, but in how we know them; i.e. the necessity of an empirical truth in this world could be discovered, and then that truth would become *a priori*.

in order to stave off the danger of purely abstract negative philosophy, will be posited into a dynamic context.

Despite this goal and scope discrepancy between Grant's work and mine, his thought is very important for the structure of this current investigation, as he has developed many conceptual tools which enable us to think dynamic process. In light of the methodological importance which Grant's conceptual tools enjoy in this work, I have to remark that this work does not seek to confirm or repudiate Grant's thesis that Schelling has engaged in *Naturphilosophie* throughout the entirety of his work without exception. Nevertheless, *Naturphilosophie* – which, Jason Wirth writes, is more than simply philosophy of nature as a domain, but rather “philosophy in the image of nature and reciprocally, nature as the image of philosophy”¹⁰¹ – is crucial to Schelling, also in his later writing. More on this “demarcation” problematic will not be said here, and I will presently go back to discussing Grant's conceptual framework. In this text, I make use of two main concepts, which I will here clarify. The first concept is rather a conceptual pair, namely the pair “antecedence – consequence”. Grant's use of this conceptual pair is not identical with the usual usage of the pair “cause-effect”, because the consequents also determine their antecedents (and, of course, vice versa), as is evidenced by the following:

Yet what is antecedent is not for that reason ground. Grounding is operative only where there are consequents, so that the conclusion that ground is itself consequent upon consequents rather than prior to them seems inescapable. If grounds arise in this way, their arising seems to entail a degree of circularity that undercuts the asymmetry of the relation, rendering ground and consequent codependent.¹⁰²

This pair is operative in what Grant calls the “law of antecedence“, a formulation which he extracts from the *Freiheitsschrift*:¹⁰³ “durch keine Art der Zusammenfassung [kann] das seiner Natur nach abgeleitete in das seine Natur nach ursprüngliche übergehen[...]"¹⁰⁴ This relation is what marks the beginning of ontology:

Ontology unfolds from this tension because a judgment concerning being arises in consequence of a prior partition of being, separating it into the being antecedent to the judgment and the being consequent upon it. A proposition therefore minimally introduces a locality, a position into what, according to the hypothesis, was without one. The being consequent upon the judgment is accordingly not identical to the being antecedent to it, since a logical space has now formed in which the subject of the proposition is a creature of that proposition.¹⁰⁵

101 Wirth, J: *Schelling's Practice of the Wild*. Albany: 2015, p. 65.

102 *Nature Thought*, p. 39.

103 See also the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie*: “das Vorausgehende im Folgenden seine Wirklichkeit hat, gegen die es demnach bloße Potenz ist.” – SW XI, 375-376. English: “the antecedent has its actuality in the consequent, against which it is mere potency.”

104 SW VII, 340. The English *PI*, 13 has: “no sort of combination can transform what is by nature derivative into what is by nature original”.

105 *Nature Thought*, p. 26.

Through predication, each new process generates a new locality, a new position for thinking.¹⁰⁶ From this new position, the antecedent can no longer be fully recapitulated, because every production process leaves behind an indivisible remainder¹⁰⁷ – the antecedent contains potencies which have disappeared in the consequent, not actualised and no more actualisable. There is simply *more* in the antecedent than there is in the consequent. I will, in my analysis of the potency activity, use this “law of antecedence” in the operations of the *Potenzenlehre*: that which is produced through the determination of the *Potenzenlehre* is new, this novelty is produced constantly, yet leaves a constant “indivisible remainder”.

The second central concept in Grant’s work is that of identity and the corresponding law of identity. This formulation is also taken from the *Freiheitsschrift*, in which Schelling laments the misunderstanding of the meaning of identity and the copula (“Missverständnis des Gesetzes der Identität oder des Sinns der Copula i[m] Urtheil”).¹⁰⁸ According to the correctly understood law of identity, identity is not a sameness or uniformity, but the law marking antecedents and consequents (“[dieses Gesetz] unterschied Subjekt und Prädikat als vorangehendes und folgendes (antecedes et consequens)”).¹⁰⁹ Grant expresses it as follows: “the first [element] *is* not the second; rather the one is the knowing or the producing of the other”.¹¹⁰ Paradoxically, it is identity itself that generates difference:

[I]dentity is the ongoing operation of differentiation, a creation of consequents that, insofar as it is copulative, has surface and depth but no final ground.¹¹¹

This concept of generative identity was used by Schelling since the *Freiheitsschrift*, and whenever “identity” is used in this text, it is to be understood in this generative sense.

Grant’s work can provide us with a further important insight – namely the impossibility to treat potencies as substances. Owing to his focus on becoming and processuality, Grant takes the potencies to be powers, reading the Schellingian philosophy therefore as an ontology of powers.¹¹² Yet, upon closer consideration of Schelling’s works, it remains unclear whether the

106 “Because the subject of any judgment, even if it treats of a judgment antecedent to it, entails the production of a new position, it cannot be said that there is one ultimate subject or substrate of judgment that is divided with each judgment upon it.” – *ibid.*

107 “The truth of reason, so to speak, that the subject of the proposition is not logically identical with, or the same thing as, the referent of that proposition, coincides with the truth of fact that the nature there is has as one of its consequences the making of judgments within it. It is the consequent nature of the consequent that makes the antecedent necessarily insurmountable by it.” – *Ibid.*, p. 28.

108 SW VII, 341. The English *PI*, 13 has “The reason [Grund] for such misinterpretations, which in large measure other systems have also experienced, lies in the general misunderstanding of the law of identity or the meaning of the copula in judgment.”

109 SW VII, 342. The English *PI*, 14 has: “The ancients’ profoundly meaningful [tiefsinnig] logic differentiated subject and predicate as what precedes and what follows (antecedens et consequens) and thereby expressed the real meaning of the law of identity.”

110 *Law of Insuperable Environment*, p. 5.

111 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

112 *Philosophies of Nature*, p. 12.

potencies are indeed, or do indeed represent, powers. Schelling introduces this power-based line of thought in the *Erster Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie*, where the fundamental entities of natural productivity he calls “actants” are discussed (“Aktionen” in German original – I will consider them briefly in chapter III of this work). The actions of things are then determined through these very same actants, since they are the properties of things. The other elements with which the *Erster Entwurf* concerns itself are not properties, but rather the attractive and repulsive forces. In the *Erster Entwurf* Schelling mentions potencies briefly (at least the chemical and the organic), but connects them to the properties and qualities of things, and yet he uses the concept of potency as a synonym to that of power.¹¹³ However, it remains unclear in this text, what the potencies are exactly. The *Erster Entwurf* is the only text in which Schelling, in addition to writing about the potencies, attempts to postulate activity through the action of certain entities or substances, an idea which he soon lets go as he discovers the necessity of connecting the qualitative actant-entities and the fundamental matter-constituting duality of attractive and repulsive forces together, as well as to the potencies.

Furthermore, Schelling relates the potencies in his later texts to modalities and takes a minimalistic approach towards them, as we will see later. Hence I will not concern myself in this work with constructing a powers ontology out of the potencies, but will rather, as I have already mentioned, take the potencies to be logical-ontological placeholders, leaning most heavily on the works of Thomas Buchheim in this move.¹¹⁴

Thomas Buchheim’s *Eins von Allem* is the only book dedicated entirely to Schelling’s late *Potenzenlehre*, (i.e. to the texts after 1840), and Buchheim investigates the *Potenzenlehre* in his other, shorter texts as well. Among other things, he recognises the problem of the apparent precritical status of Schelling’s philosophy of nature; however, he remarks that nature is never immediately given in Schelling’s thought, but is rather presented through the potency structure and through what he calls “die Übersetzbarkeit von Termini des Vorgängigen in die Termini

113 This can also be applied to expressions like “Der Zweck der Nutrition muß also ein ganz anderer seyn, nämlich folgender. Was durch sie in den Organismus kommt, wirkt als erregende Potenz, wirkt also nur indirekt chemisch.” (SW III, 174, for English see *First Outline*, 125) or “So ist also für die Leber z.B. die Galle eine Art von Contagium [Ansteckungsgift], ist erregende Potenz für das Organ, und dadurch selbst wieder Ursache seiner Reproduktion.” (SW III, 177, for English see *First Outline*, 128).

114 Buchheim remarks on the interconnection between logic and ontology in *Eins von Allem* (Buchheim, T.: *Eins von Allem: Die Selbstbescheidung des Idealismus in Schellings Spätphilosophie*. Hamburg: 1992, [cited henceforth as *EvA*]) e.g. pp. 61-64: “Wir müssen uns das Denken nicht sozusagen erst hinterher und post festum aufbauen aus Stücken der Wirklichkeit, sondern alles Wirkliche hat seltsamer Weise einen Vorbau von Möglichkeiten, durch den es als rational strukturiertes zu kennzeichnen ist.” English: “We must not build up thinking, so to speak, first after the event and post festum out of bits of actuality. It is rather the case that all that is actual has, in a strange fashion, a buttress of possibilities, through which it is to be marked as rationally structured.”

von Potenzen allgemein”.¹¹⁵ He calls this “schematising the antecedent” (“Schematisierung des Vorgängigen”).¹¹⁶ Moreover, he describes potencies as relevant for relations between things and expressing perspectival stances: something, he claims, can be taken under one potency or another. He gives the example of baked goods: they can be viewed, in case of a professional food photographer, who deals with them primarily in his professional capacity, as photographic objects – Buchheim takes this to be considering the baked goods under the potency of photography, and claims that there can be “false potencies” under which to consider things.¹¹⁷ I disagree with this view, even if it plays a rather preliminary role in Buchheim’s analysis – it effectively equates potencies with perspectives, and although, as we will see, potencies do to some extent provide conceptual tools for thinking perspective, it does not happen in the straightforward way of things appearing “under the potency” of cooking, photography or physics. Potencies are, as was said before, ontoepistemological, while the perspectives Buchheim describes at the beginning of his book (such as “photography”) seem to be almost arbitrary. A second, more refined presentation of the potencies developed by Buchheim fares much better: he presents potencies as placeholders, such that the structure they construct, and which Schelling calls a “reason-organism” (“Vernunft-Organismus”), is a definition of the structure of everything that is:

In diesem Stück [„Vernunft-Organismus“] ist Vernunft nicht selbst irgendetwas, das eine gewisse Form besitzt, sondern sie ist die *Definition einer Struktur* auf alles, was etwas ist, in welcher festliegt, daß, was immer der Fall und ein Seiendes ist, einer gewissen Form logischer Entschiedenheit gehorcht.¹¹⁸

The potency complex forms, according to Buchheim’s reading, a reason-apparatus, serving to express possibility – possibility of that which actually can be as well as the pure logical possible structure of everything that exists.¹¹⁹ The potencies express the whole of logical,

115 English: “[...] the transposability of the terms of the antecedent into the terms of potencies in general.” Compare here Buchheim, T.: Das „objektive Denken“ in Schellings Naturphilosophie, In *Kant-Studien*, 81 (1990) pp. 321-338, esp. p. 322-3.

116 Ibid.

117 *EvA*, p. 24.

118 *EvA*, p. 8. “In this piece [the reason-organism] reason is not itself something that possesses a specific form, but it is *the definition of a structure* upon everything that is something, in which it is determined that whatever is the case and is a being obeys a certain form of logical determination.”

119 If it appears odd to someone that the determination of a thing assume the character of possibility, he should remember how Immanuel Kant has described the Analogies of experience in the first *Critique*: “Things must be entirely different with those principles that are to bring the existence of appearances under rules a priori. For, since this existence cannot be constructed these principles can concern only the regulation of existence, and can yield nothing but merely regulative principles. Here therefore neither axioms nor intuitions are to be thought of; rather, if a perception is given to us in a temporal relation to others (even though indeterminate), it cannot be said a priori which and how great this other perception is, but only how it is necessarily combined with the first, as regards its existence, in this modus of time. In philosophy analogies signify something very different from what they represent in mathematics. In the latter they are formulas that assert the identity of two relations of magnitude, and are always constitutive, so that if two members of the proportion are given the third is also thereby given, i.e., can be constructed. In philosophy, however, analogy is not the identity of two quantitative but of two qualitative relations, where from three given members I can

material and ontological possibilities: they outline the modal dimensions of being.¹²⁰ Logical possibility is, at least at a first glance, the *conceivability* of something: “[f]ür die erste Reflektion gibt das allgemeine Kriterium der Möglichkeit den Ausgangspunkt, wonach all das möglich ist, dessen Vereinigung nicht logisch zwingend ist.”¹²¹ But it is not merely conceivability – the logical possibility expressed in and through the Potenzenlehre has a “grounding character” (“grundlegender Charakter”),¹²² because potencies express the logical structure of things: they structure our thought when we attribute possibilities to being. The potencies, taken as logical possibility, do not apply to the emergence of things, instead lending things their logical structure. Logical possibility is that which reflects the modal structure of structured being as a whole. Potencies in their expressing logical possibility, although pertaining to the whole, are also important for individual things’ determinations, and that is because of what Buchheim calls the “incommensurability of being and being-equal” – “*Inkommensurabilität von Sein und Gleichsein, [...] gemäß der ersteres durch letzteres nicht erschöpft, jenes aber ohne dieses nicht gedacht werden kann.*”¹²³ Buchheim here means that there is always more being than what is equal to itself and to its own actuality – the potencies are always more than is actually, and this excess structures the becoming of things. The second kind of possibility expressed by the potencies is the material, which is nearer to the usual concept of possibility – it is tied to the possibility of the occurrence of something, an individual thing: it is “daß bestimmtes Sein oder auch ein Verband von Seinsbestimmungen (kennzeichnenden Prädikaten) zur Möglichkeit des Auftretens, des Eintritts von Fällen in ihrem Rahmen erklärt wird”.¹²⁴ Material possibility is therefore not the most general structure that grounds all definition and all meaning. It is more specific and related to an object which is already determined, but not yet actualised – something we generally call “possible”. The third kind of possibility is the actual possibility – the real possibility of actual things, involved in

cognise and give a priori only the relation to a fourth member but not this fourth member itself, although I have a rule for seeking it in experience and a mark for discovering it there. An analogy of experience will therefore be only a rule in accordance with which unity of experience is to arise from perceptions (not as a perception itself, as empirical intuition in general), and as a principle it will not be valid of the objects (of the appearances) constitutively but merely regulatively.” - Kant, I.: *Critique of Pure Reason*. trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 297-298 (B222-223). [Henceforth, Kant will be cited from this edition as CPR according to the page numbers of the original edition.] The above quote, in connection with Kant’s claims in the *Critique of Judgment* that all judgments about nature are reflexive judgments and hence merely regulative (and never apodictically certain), and together with the fact that Schelling is unquestionably post-Kantian and knows his critical duties well, shows that our judgments neither exhaust their object, nor constitute it. Hence there are far more possibilities to our judgment than might appear on a first glance.

120 *EvA*, p. 51.

121 *Ibid.*, p. 27. English: “For the first reflection gives the general criterion of possibility of the starting point, according to which all that is possible is such that its negation is not logically necessary”.

122 *Ibid.*, p. 22ff.

123 *Ibid.*, p. 29. English: “[...] *the incommensurability of being and being-equal*, [...] according to which the former is not exhausted by the latter, but the latter cannot be thought without the former.”

124 *Ibid.*, p. 33. English: “the determined being, or a collection of determinations of being (identifying predicates) is explained within its framework as to the possibility of arising, of occurrence of cases”.

the world (“in und mit der Welt erst aufgetane Möglichkeit”).¹²⁵ Potencies can express all these kinds of possibility – acknowledging this and arguing for it is the strongest point of Buchheim’s reading – as they operate at several different levels simultaneously, as will hopefully become clear in the course of this work. Potencies are a fundamental grounding logical structure, a conceptual instrument for investigating the (still hypothetical) possibilities of a certain object and simultaneously an instrument to grasp the real possibilities of a real object (the transition from negative to positive philosophy is this transition to potencies as real possibilities of real objects). They are capable of having such a triple character because they are not determinate entities. The potencies are functional; they are placeholders and coordinates. As Buchheim puts it: “‘Stellen’, [...] wie Ordinaten auf einem Nullpunkt”.¹²⁶ If this were not the case, then it would have been impossible to present the potencies coherently – as will be seen in the course of this work, the potencies are too “fluid” in order to be substances, and the texts which treat the potencies as modalities, powers or “moments” (moments of whatever that may be) do not really explain what is understood by those terms.¹²⁷ An exception, in addition to Buchheim’s work, is the work of Hermann Schrödter, who presents the potencies as constituents of that which has being, i.e. of entities (“Konstituenten des Seienden”),¹²⁸ an expression which used by Schelling himself as an expression of possibility, capacity and to refer to constitutive parts of being.¹²⁹ Schrödter however has not written extensively on the topic of the *Potenzenlehre* in particular, hence Buchheim’s views on the potencies in Schelling’s late philosophy remain the most important for the purposes of this work. Thomas Buchheim is, furthermore, one of the Schelling scholars who explicitly avoid restricting the positive philosophy to a particular topic (e.g. history or religion). He also unifies and tries to make consistent the *Potenzenlehre* of several texts, and introduces the *Potenzenlehre* into the distinction between positive and negative philosophy, underlining at the same time the reciprocal relation between the two philosophies.¹³⁰ A claim is, for Buchheim, positive when it recognizes the problematic relation between being and being-equal (Sein und Gleichsein); furthermore this fact is, according to Buchheim, the reason for the impossibility of full conceptual access to objects and the withdrawal of objects from such contact, at least in regard to their potentialities, even if those objects, taken in regard to their

125 Ibid., p. 36. English: “the possibility first opened in and with the world”.

126 Ibid., p. 51. English: “Positions, [...] like ordinates on an origin”.

127 This is perhaps the biggest shortcoming of anglophone Schelling scholarship, Grant included. I have already mentioned that good definitions and explications of potency-structures are extremely rare in the literature.

128 *Grundlagen der Lehre*, here p. 568.

129 Ibid. pp. 569-573.

130 See *EvA*, p. 70.

past, can be grasped.¹³¹ A positive claim is *emphatic*: if it has the form of “A is B”, then it contains the possibility that A is not B within itself. This “A is B” is for Schelling no purely logical proposition, but one which compares the actuality of a state of affairs with the possibility of another state of affairs.¹³² Against the backdrop of the three kinds of possibility listed above and the discussion of the positive and negative philosophies, Buchheim’s *Eins von Allem* then addresses the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* and performs a close reading of the text. In contrast to a close reading, this work will approach the *Potenzenlehre* in a more systematic, rather reconstructive vein, noting along the way the main disagreement between my reading and that of Buchheim – *Eins von Allem* restricts the way in which the potencies can be described as dynamic, insisting that they are static and not self-fulfilling. While I do agree that Schelling’s potencies are not straightforwardly potencies to-be-something which actualise themselves out of themselves, I take issue with Buchheim’s insistence on the static character of the potencies – a character which he takes from the *Identitätsphilosophie*, the texts and conclusions of which he uses quite often, thus collapsing the important changes that took place in Schelling’s philosophy after the failure of the *Weltalter* project and possibly overlooking nuances.¹³³ I agree, with Carlos Ramirez Escobar, that potencies stand for an “innere Dynamik der Wirklichkeit”.¹³⁴ All this will be examined in what follows, as I attempt to extract the abstract schema of the *Potenzenlehre* from the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* in order to then consider its negativity as well as its positivity, and then investigate the following problematic relations: on the one hand, the relation between potencies and what Schelling calls “unprethinkable being” which supposedly lies at their ground, and on the other hand the relation between potencies and their eschatological limit.

Before I turn to an outline of this work, I would like to highlight another very important work on Schelling’s late philosophy – Markus Gabriel’s *Der Mensch im Mythos* of 2006 and the follow-up Aarhus lectures, held in 2013. Gabriel’s book discusses, among other things, the *Potenzenlehre* in the context of positive and negative philosophies, and describes it as a negative diving-board towards the inversion of the ontological argument for the existence of God which Schelling carries out in the ninth lecture of the *Philosophie der Offenbarung*. The detailed and sophisticated insights into Schelling’s philosophy of mythology this book offers

131 Ibid., p. 92-93.

132 Compare also Rezvykh, P.: “Pozdnyy Schelling i Kant (Поздний Шеллинг и Кант)”. In *Istoriko-filosofskiy Yezhegodnik (Историко-философский ежегодник)*. 2003. p. 280-303, [henceforth cited as *Pozdnyy Schelling*].

133 Perhaps Buchheim’s borrowing from the *Identitätsphilosophie* is not very odd – Christian Iber too takes Schelling’s late negative philosophy to be a reconstruction of the *Identitätsphilosophie* (see *Das Andere der Vernunft*, p. 281). However, Iber merely asserts this position without offering any explanation as to why he chooses to read negative philosophy in this way.

134 *Reich und Persönlichkeit*, p. 191. English: “inner dynamic of actuality”. It must be noted that Escobar’s very interesting reading of late Schelling as a political thinker is based in part on the fact that he takes potencies to be an expression of will – not a human will, but an impersonal one. While this is an intriguing suggestion, I will steer clear of the metaphor of the will, for fear of superfluous anthropomorphising.

are not our topic of discussion here; but this work will use some definitions Gabriel coins in his work and consider (also critically) some arguments Gabriel makes, especially when it comes to the difference between positive and negative philosophies.

The *Potenzenlehre* is, as I have already mentioned, a formalism. It must unfold in the wake of the fact that being pre-exists it – something which Schelling calls unprethinkable being – and this fact grounds the formalism.¹³⁵ The unprethinkable being and especially Gabriel's discussions of it, will be extensively addressed in chapters I, IV and V. The general premise with which one can begin here is as follows: if the potencies are functions and if functions cannot unfold in sheer void, but must, so to speak, inhabit something (the question whether this something is an object or rather an activity is not raised here yet), then their being must indeed precede their functional activity. Insofar as all intelligible structures (and perhaps all ontological structures whatsoever) stem from the functional determining activity of the potencies, this antecedent being is also unstructured. Insofar as, furthermore, the potency dialectic encompasses all possibility, this antecedent being is fully *actus* – it has no place in the tripartite potency structure. Gabriel underscores this fact, and although it seems obvious, it is crucial to keep it in mind as the previously mentioned multifaceted nature of the *Potenzenlehre* can mislead one to attempt to understand everything in relation to potencies and pose the meaningless question of locating the unprethinkable within potency structures. There is no answer to this question; unprethinkable being is defined precisely outside the potency structure.

A further central claim of this work, explored in chapters II and III is that potencies have a *fractal* structure, i.e. that each element of a potency triad is itself the result of infinite other rows and layers of operating triads, just as each potency triad becomes an element in another triad, operating at a higher level. Due to this fractality, we can pose the question of how the original activity of the potencies can emerge from unprethinkable being – or the fact of being's unprethinkability; the distinction between these two concepts will be drawn in what follows. From our perspective of thinking entities – insofar as we experience structured activity (and only structured activity) and think as well as know that something has actually generated this structure – all we can possibly say is that the potencies are possible or potential and that the unprethinkable merely *is* – it *is* and gives the potency structure its *being*.

In light of this relationship between potencies and unprethinkable being, the central distinction of Schelling's late philosophy – that between positive and negative philosophies – comes to the fore. The meaning behind this distinction for Schelling's thought as well as his critique of

135 On this topic, about the absolute individual grounding the potencies, see Jimenez, A.R.: *Das Potenzlose. Die Spur Schelling in der Spätphilosophie Heideggers*. Hildesheim: 2014, p. 33-34, [cited henceforth as *Das Potenzlose*].

negative philosophising brings us to the question of whether the entirety of the *Potenzenlehre* is exclusively negative. The entire fourth chapter will be dedicated to this question, but I would like to make a few preliminary observations here, in order to separate my position from that of Gabriel in *Mensch im Mythos* and in the Aarhus lectures from the get-go, to elaborate on it further in what follows. For Gabriel positive philosophy is the historical development of a God-positing consciousness, and he takes the *Potenzenlehre* to be a negative philosophy. Furthermore, Gabriel sees unprethinkable being to be something which fits only within the framework of negative philosophy and that within positive philosophy this is to be replaced with God – evidence to that extent can be found in passages like the following:

Schellings eigentliches Anliegen in der *positiven* Philosophie ist also die geschichtliche Überwindung der *negativen* Theologie. Gott ist gerade nicht identisch mit dem unvordenklichen Sein, das sich im letzten Akt der Theorie als ihre eigene Seinsbasis erweist. Schelling votiert hier also bewußt gegen die negative Theologie, um nicht in die „Gefahr des Verneinens“ zu geraten, Gott lediglich als das Unerkennbare bestimmen zu müssen. Gott als geschichtlich sich realisierende Persönlichkeit nach dem Modell des jüdisch-christlichen Monotheismus zu denken, ist inkompatibel damit, Gott auf einen abstrakten Inhalt der philosophischen Theologie zu reduzieren. [...] Das Unternehmen der positiven Philosophie wendet sich zugleich gegen den abstrakten Theismus eines Philosophengottes wie gegen den Fideismus eines *salto mortale* in den blinden Glauben [...]¹³⁶

This quoted passage distinguishes between two sides – on one hand there is the negative (rational) theology, undoubtedly a part of negative philosophy, and in which unprethinkable being takes the place of God, and on the other hand there is the positive philosophy, in which God is not just the unknowable, but an unfolding, historical and personal divinity. The negativisation according to which unprethinkable being occupies the position of God considers this God/unprethinkable being merely from the position of thought. This is sensible insofar as we, as thinking things, are indeed considering things from the position of thought and insofar as the unprethinkable being only has meaning for thought; it however exceeds thought and one should take that into account. Hence the unprethinkable being can also be defined in the way in which Gabriel defines it in his other book *Transcendental Ontology* – namely as the transcendental condition of meaning (and this reading is confirmed in the *Begründung der Positiven Philosophie*). But it can also be considered – this is how Schelling proposes to ontologise the terminus of negative philosophy in the *Begründung* – as the

136 *MiM*, p. 355. English: “Schelling’s real concern in the *positive* philosophy is thus the historical overcoming of *negative* theology. God is precisely not identical with unprethinkable being, which turns out to be, in the last movement of theory, the basis of its own being. Schelling here consciously comes forth against negative theology, so as not to fall into the “danger of negation” and determine God merely as the unknowable. To think God as a historically self-realising personality after the model of Judeo-Christian monotheism is incompatible with reducing God to the abstract content of philosophical theology [...] The enterprise of positive philosophy turns both against the abstract theism of a philosophical deity and against the fideism of a *salto mortale* into blind faith [...]”.

ontological condition of the unfolding of all process. This – and the position of God with respect to the *Potenzenlehre* – will be treated in chapter V, along with the role of unprethinkable being in predication.

This work will, as announced at the very beginning, adopt the hypothesis that the potencies of Schelling's late *Potenzenlehre* are functional placeholders. From there on, the question of how the potencies' interactions produce determination will become central to this work. In light of the previous considerations presented in this introduction, this work is divided into three large parts. The first part encompasses the first three chapters and is dedicated to the structure of the *Potenzenlehre* and its rootedness in Kant's critical philosophy, especially Kant's account of thoroughgoing determination. The first chapter specifically will ground the *Potenzenlehre* and this current text in Kant's critical project. In this context the Kantian transcendental dialectic and especially the transcendental ideal will be problematised through Schelling's critique of the ideal in the *Begründung der Positiven Philosophie*. Furthermore, the necessity to think the role of the transcendental ideal in the process of predication will be argued for. The transcendental ideal is essential in Kant's thought for understanding the development of the *Potenzenlehre* – the relation between the individual and the infinite articulated in Schelling's late philosophy is primarily influenced by the transcendental dialectic.¹³⁷ Schelling's critical argumentation will be closely examined, reconstructed and supplemented with a similar, yet distinct critique of the transcendental ideal as ground of predication which the Russian Schelling scholar Petr Rezvykh develops in his work on Schelling's late philosophy and its relation to Kant. This chapter is to show that Kant himself needs a certain transcendental condition which lies outside the very structures of his critical system – he needs something which is ontologically independent of the transcendental subject.

Chapter II seeks to explain the structure of potencies in Schelling's late philosophy, especially in the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*. Each of the three potencies will first be examined separately as an element of the potency process in general and the process of predication more specifically, then the three potencies will be examined together. In a deflationary reading, the relation between -A and +A (the determined and the determining element, as we shall see) in the mechanism of predication will be explained as the relation between the world and subject, where the world and subject determine each other reciprocally through what Schelling calls *Universio* – an inversion in the sequence of the potencies. Furthermore, it will be argued that the potencies are not to be considered separately from the entire tripartite cycle of their operations and not as if their activity ever ultimately comes to stop at an individual finite

¹³⁷ Compare *Spekulation und Faktizität*, p. 218.

product. Finally, that chapter will address a peculiarity of the three potencies – namely the fact that the lines between them blur, on account of their reciprocal determination and on account of -A and +A's unification in one product.

Chapter III will consider some of the implication of potency philosophy. The question of various notations Schelling uses will be posed anew. I will suggest, in this chapter that Schelling's usage of two different notations speaks for the nestedness or fractalisation of the potencies in one another. Such a fractalisation means that no potency is to be taken as a fundamental most basic unit or level: Schelling does not search for fundamental entities, as he believes that this is a methodologically unsound move: even if such entities were found, their emergence would be inexplicable. Both notations Schelling uses present the same potencies, but they are in one case presented as a singular triad, and in the other as a triad which is itself potentiated through its interaction with different triads. This means that the entirety of -A, +A and $\pm A$ can be together symbolised as A, and that this A can be further potentiated to A^2 and then to A^3 through further potency operations. The application of this fractalisation in the field of predication will then be looked into. The potencies can only be grounded in a constant ungrounding, both in respect of their past and their future. These (un)grounding operations have no ultimate end, and yet are necessary. As soon as the potencies are involved in becoming, the laws of logic enter life and what was negative becomes positive. This chapter will also treat the question of what it means for this potency structure to be abstract. We will see that abstraction is nothing but artificial separation, dividing this structure from the processes in which it is active. In relation to predication, it will be demonstrated here how something as abstract as a predication scheme can be brought into becoming, carrying forth the thoughts of the second chapter.

The second part of this work is dedicated to the relationship between the *Potenzenlehre* and other ontological themes in Schelling, namely the problematic of positive and negative philosophy, the role of God in relation to *Potenzenlehre* and the relation between potencies, space and time. The fourth chapter will be dedicated to situating the structure of the *Potenzenlehre* within the framework distinguishing between positive and negative philosophy. It will be shown that whether a philosophy is positive or negative depends on how the potencies as principles are applied in the construction of the philosophy in question. This is also a position taken by Buchheim in *Eins von Allem*, where he addresses the fact that the kind of possibility a philosophy adopts, determines the philosophy: "Damit ist angedeutet, daß der große Umschwung zwischen negativer und positive Philosophie zusammengeht mit jener unabweislichen Verschiedenheit zweier Formen der Möglichkeitsrede".¹³⁸ The distinction

138 *EvA*, p. 40.

between positive and negative philosophy is also located at the level of grounding – the involvement of philosophy in the chains of becoming. Whether a philosophy (at least one based on the potencies) is positive or negative is determined, as I will argue, partly pragmatically, in the sense that it depends on how the potencies and the tools of the *Potenzenlehre* are used.

Chapter V will pose two important questions: firstly, to what extent is the chain of potency to be considered cyclical, and to what extent it is linear. This question raises itself on the basis of earlier *Potenzenlehre* texts, (such as the *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*, or the *Weltalter*), where the potency chain is portrayed as a linear chain in the wake of God. These earlier Schelling texts are not the proper topic of this investigation, hence I will deal with this question of linearity, as presented in this text, only insofar as it relates to the question of God in the late *Potenzenlehre*. The second question this chapter will pose is then this: what precisely is the role God plays in the late *Potenzenlehre* texts? I will argue that God is an attractor to potencies, although an exclusively ideal one. The chapter will also take up Kant's concept of transcendental ideal and see that, although Schelling ontologises it, it stands as ontologised beyond the framework of space and time, as ground of all actuality and facticity of being and as architectonic openness towards the future. This last point will reveal an eschatology which actualises all potencies and at the end of which all activities cease – the transformation of the world into God.

Chapter VI looks at the problematic of space and time within the framework of the *Potenzenlehre*. In Schelling's early *Naturphilosophie*, time and space are considered to be the result of the interaction between opposite powers. With the help of this *naturphilosophical* conception of space and time, and with reference to textual clues in the *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen* and the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*, it will be argued that Schelling is a realist concerning space and time. This chapter will then consider Schelling's odd claim that every thing has its own time in itself ("jedes Ding (nicht nur das Universum) die Zeit in sich selbst [hat]").¹³⁹ Schelling's realism about space and time will here be linked to the *Potenzenlehre* in order to argue that space and time are both constituted through the potencies. The third and last part of the work coincides with the last chapter, asking the question of the emergence of the *Potenzenlehre* in Schelling's thought (chapter VII). It primarily investigates the question of individuation, where I follow a hypothesis put forth by Daniel Whistler, namely that Schelling has formulated *Identitätsphilosophie* in order to solve the problem of individuation. According to Whistler, *Naturphilosophie* could give no satisfying answer to the problem of individuation because the concept of determination in this philosophy remains

139 SW VII, 431.

negative. *Identitätsphilosophie* provides a new, positive concept of determination and hence a better solution to the problem of individuation. This chapter will examine certain passages from *Identitätsphilosophie* writings (specifically *Darstellung Meines Systems* and *Fernerer Darstellungen*) closely, argue that the *Identitätsphilosophie* does not solve the problem of individuation and suggest that the *Potenzenlehre* can be read as a further attempt to solve this problem.

Finally, it should be remarked that because the aforementioned lack of literature on the *Potenzenlehre*, Schelling's *Sämmtliche Werke* will be quoted as often as possible in this work in order to strengthen its arguments and demonstrate a serious engagement with the primary texts. All German quotes given in the text will be supplemented by translations, either published or mine, in the footnotes. German quotes given in the footnotes will be followed by a reference to their English translation, if such exists, and to my translation, if not. In the translation of *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*, *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* and *Allgemeine Deduktion des Dynamischen Prozesses* I am greatly indebted to Iain Hamilton Grant, who shared his draft translations of these texts with the participants of the Pittsburgh Summer Symposium in Contemporary Philosophy at Duquesne University in August 2013. I have consulted these drafts while making some of my translations.

Part I: The Potency Philosophy

I

The Ungrounding of Negative Philosophy

Kant's first *Critique* project is meant to be an immanent critique of reason. Kant undertook it in the hopes that he can present a full, self-enclosed scheme for the operations of the faculties of sensibility, understanding and reason – all through reason. This immanent critique was to give an exhaustive, self-sufficient account of the human faculties and to simultaneously lay metaphysics, the result of errant reason, to a deserved and overdue rest. To try and “overcome” the Kantian prohibition on metaphysics, then, one should dispute this metaphysical errancy of reason – or affirm it as the only thing reason can do, even as it seeks to immanently critique itself. This latter is the claim Schelling makes in his 1842 Berlin lectures *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, published posthumously along with other lectures as part of the *Philosophie der Offenbarung*. In that lecture course, Schelling distinguishes between a negative and a positive philosophy. The negative philosophy is a philosophy of reason whose primary focus is our cognition and the conceptual determination it gives to objects and whose function is to regulate thought and limit what we can think. About this kind of philosophy, Schelling writes:

[D]ie Vernunft, wenn gleich ihr letztes Ziel und Absehen nur das Seyende ist, das Ist, kann es doch nicht anders bestimmen, sie hat keinen Begriff für dasselbe als den des nicht nicht Seyenden, nicht in ein anderes Uebergehenden, d. h. einen negativen Begriff, und hiermit ist denn also auch der Begriff einer negativen Wissenschaft gegeben, welcher eben dieß obliegt, den Begriff dessen, was das Seyende selbst ist, auf diese Weise zu erzeugen, nämlich indem alles nicht Seyende, was implicite oder potentia mit in dem allemeinen und unbestimmten Begriff des Seyenden liegt, successive ausgeschlossen wird. Diese Wissenschaft kann nicht weiter führen, als eben zu dem angezeigten negativen Begriff, also überhaupt nur zum Begriffe des Seyenden selbst [...] ¹⁴⁰

This negative philosophy is thus concerned with the “whatness” of things, their conceptual determination, their essence, what they are in abstraction from their being.¹⁴¹ In contrast to

140 SW XIII, 70-71. In English, the passage (quoted from Schelling, F. W. J.: *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures*. Trans. Bruce Matthews. New York: 2008, p. 137) reads as follows [henceforth cited as *GPP*]: “For reason—and this is of great importance and our next result—reason has none other than a negative concept of that which being itself is. Even if the final goal and objective of reason is solely the being that Is, it can nonetheless determine nothing else: it has no concept for the being that Is other than that of what is not nonbeing, of that which does not pass over into otherness, that is, a negative concept. With this is then also provided the concept of a negative science, whose duty is precisely this: to produce in this manner the concept of what being itself is through the successive elimination of everything that is not being and that lies implicit or potentia in the general and indeterminate concept of being. This science can lead no further than to the aforementioned negative concept; thus, in general, only to the concept of being itself.”

141 In this sense, negative philosophy is itself a kind of abstraction – more on this in Chapter V.

that, Schelling developed the positive philosophy, a philosophy that deals with the existence of things, their “thatness” (*that* they are), their reality:

Daß aber dieses nun auch in seiner eignen Reinheit, mit Ausschließung des bloß zufälligen Seyns, über diesem Seyn existirt, dieses zu erkennen, kann nicht mehr die Sache jener negativen, sondern nur einer anderen, in Gegensatz mit ihr positiv zu nennenden Wissenschaft seyn, für welche positive Wissenschaft jene erst den eigentlichen, den höchsten Gegenstand gesucht hat.¹⁴²

Those two philosophies do not seem to overlap: the positive philosophy deals with the actual existence of things, while the negative is only concerned with their possibility, the pure potency of being.¹⁴³ While I will discuss these two philosophies in extensive detail in chapter V, it is important to mention them here, as the distinction lies at the very heart of Schelling’s critique of Kant. According to Schelling, negative philosophy, the science of reason, does not and cannot access what is – it is self-contained and immanent, just like Kant’s first *Critique* is – or rather is meant to be. A negative philosophy, as Schelling insists in the *Grounding*, is necessarily limited, and he proceeds to identify a cryptic “hole in Kant’s critique”,¹⁴⁴ specifically in its treatment of the faculty of reason, even more specifically in Kant’s transcendental ideal. In what follows, I will re-identify this hole, go down through it, and see where it leads on its other end.

If we set Schelling’s “hole” in the transcendental dialectic aside for a moment, there is only one “opening”, one faculty that is not closed unto itself in Kant’s first *Critique* – obviously, sensibility. This, however, is not a significant opening, since the “input” we receive from objects of our experience before applying categories to it is not really something we can say anything meaningful about. Understanding and reason, then, are supposed to be enclosed within themselves: understanding synthesizes experience using the manifold of space and time, the schemata of imagination, and the array of concepts it possesses, while reason, in turn, organises the experiences produced by the understanding using the ideas of pure reason.¹⁴⁵ There are three ideas of reason, “unconditioned in every relation”,¹⁴⁶ and

142 SW XIII, 79. See *GPP* p. 144-145: “But to know in its own purity, through the exclusion of contingent being [Seyn], that this being itself exists above that being: this can no longer be a task of that negative science, but of a different one, which in contrast is to be called a positive science, and for which that negative science first sought the proper and highest object.”

143 See SW XIII, 75: “[I]n der Vernunftwissenschaft, oder, was dasselbe ist, in der rein apriorischen Wissenschaft, nur die Möglichkeit der Dinge, nicht die Wirklichkeit, begriffen werden. Die Vernunft ist aber nur die unendliche Potenz des Erkennens und hat als solche auch nur die unendliche Potenz des Seyns zu ihrem Inhalt und kann von diesem aus eben darum auch nur zum a priori Möglichen gelangen, das dann freilich auch das Wirkliche, in der Erfahrung Vorkommende, ist, aber sie gelangt zu ihm nicht als dem Wirklichen, sondern als zu dem bloß a priori Möglichen.” For English, see *GPP* p. 141.

144 SW XIII, 168 and *GPP*, p. 208.

145 I am not even trying to make a claim here about how the synthesis of experience happens; all that matters here is that we cannot, with the exception of the categories, definitively know the components that go

they function as limiting points of syllogism, i.e., they are the regulative ideas that serve as rules for syllogistic reasoning.¹⁴⁷ Whenever we make an inference on the basis of our experience,¹⁴⁸ we are using the ideas of reason to furnish general statements of syllogism – with understanding providing the particular ones. The general statements (major premises) of a syllogism are produced “by means of a prosyllogism”.¹⁴⁹ This means that there is for every type of syllogism – categorical, hypothetical and disjunctive – a chain of further syllogisms, tending to the unconditioned, except that the determination relation here is inverted: the unconditioned ideas determine the chain. These three unconditioned are the “subject that is no longer a predicate”, i.e. the soul, for the categorical syllogism; the “presupposition that presupposes nothing further”, i.e. the world, for the hypothetical syllogism; and finally the “aggregate of members of a division such that nothing further is required for it to complete the division of a concept”,¹⁵⁰ i.e. the transcendental ideal, for the disjunctive syllogism. Kant states quite clearly the great importance of the operations of reason:

For the law of reason to seek unity is necessary, since without it we would have no reason, and without that, no coherent use of the understanding, and, lacking that, no sufficient mark of empirical truth; thus in regard to the latter we simply have to presuppose the systematic unity of nature as objectively valid and necessary.¹⁵¹

The three ideas of reason are regulative – they limit the operations of the understanding, and prevent it from engaging in illicit speculation. Without this regulative influence of the ideas, reason would fall either into hopeless scepticism, or into staunch dogmatism, both being “the death of a healthy philosophy, though the former might also be called the euthanasia of pure reason.”¹⁵² The three ideas of reason govern logical inferences, down to the simplest of them –

into such a synthesis “pre-experience”, as it were. The initial pre-conceptual manifold of space and time cannot be known, or for that matter, thought, while Kant’s rather stunning unclarity on the subject of schemata only evidences that even if there are “middle men” between our sensations and our conceptual representings, these are only known inferentially insofar as they have something in common with these conceptual representings. What the schemata have in common with pure, pre-conceptual sensations is non-conceptualisable and unknown.

146 CPR B383.

147 The idea of the soul being the regulative idea of the categorical syllogism, the world of the hypothetical and the transcendental ideal of the disjunctive. See CPR B360-361.

148 And we do this almost all the time – each operation of judging any object that appears to us, with the exception of the simplest singular judgements that are carried out using the categories only, implies using the syllogistic faculty of reason: “If the understanding may be a faculty of unity of appearances by means of rules, then reason is the faculty of the unity of the rules of understanding under principles. Thus it never applies directly to experience or to any object, but instead applies to the understanding, in order to give unity a priori through concepts to the understanding’s manifold cognitions, which may be called “the unity of reason,” and is of an altogether different kind than any unity that can be achieved by the understanding.” – CPR B359.

149 CPR B364.

150 CPR B380.

151 CPR B679.

152 CPR B434.

those which make a lot of what we usually think are direct experiences. However, the transcendental ideal stands apart from the soul and the world in that it does not just organise our experiences, but straightforwardly determines them. It does not merely by being the architectonic ideal of reason, but also as what Kant calls a “sum” and “ground” of all determination.

I. The Architectonic Linchpin: Sum vs. Ground

At the conclusion of his section on antinomies, Kant talks about the necessary being – the metaphysical entity that pans out to become the transcendental ideal. We expect to hear that it is, much like the metaphysical soul and the metaphysical world, a non-existing castle in the air, a result of the flights of errant reason which we must take care not to objectify. What we instead find, however, is a bizarre passage apparently to the contrary:

As long as we, with our concepts of reason, have as our object merely the totality of the conditions in the world of sense, and what service reason can perform in respect of them, our ideas are transcendental but still cosmological. But as soon as we posit the unconditioned (which is what is really at issue) in that which lies outside the sensible world, and hence in that which is outside all possible experience, then the ideas come to be transcendent; they do not serve merely to complete the empirical use of reason (which always remains an idea, never to be completely carried out, but nevertheless to be followed), rather they separate themselves entirely from it and make themselves into objects whose matter is not drawn from experience, and whose objective reality rests not on the completion of the empirical series but on pure concepts a priori. Such transcendent ideas have a merely intelligible object, which one is of course allowed to admit as a transcendental object, but about which one knows nothing; but for the assumption of such an object, in thinking it as a thing determinable by its distinguishing and inner predicates, we have on our side neither grounds of its possibility (since it is independent of all concepts of experience) nor the least justification, and so it is a mere thought-entity. Nevertheless, among the cosmological ideas, the one occasioning the fourth antinomy presses us to venture so far as to take this step. For the existence of appearances, not grounded in the least within itself but always conditioned, demands that we look around us for something different from all appearances, hence for an intelligible object, with which this contingency would stop.¹⁵³

Kant is faced by a need, a transcendental demand of our reason, to postulate a certain transcendental object distinct from all appearances. The transcendental ideal is not the first transcendental object Kant insists on postulating (the in-itself comes to mind), and yet the role of this object, of the transcendental ideal is far greater than that of the in-itself: Kant makes it into the ground of determination of experience as a whole, as the architectonic principle which

153 CPR, B593-594.

systematises our thought under a principle, namely the form of the totality of knowledge.¹⁵⁴ But not only does the transcendental ideal determine our thoughts as a totality, it also determines all individual phenomena. Kant invokes the contingency of appearances as a reason for this postulation: appearances are contingent in the sense that they, without some ground transcending them, have no reference point outside of our transcendental structures.¹⁵⁵ They are not rooted in the in-itself in any determinable way, and yet Kant needs to find a principle according to which determinations are ascribed to them. If then furthermore transcendental ideal were not part of the operations of our reason as an ideal, appearances would not be necessarily determined by anything, as they would not have a reference point outside the transcendental structures or inside them, and thus they would not be really knowable insofar as knowledge presupposes certainty and therefore necessary determination of its objects. With the precise relation between the in-itself and the appearances left inaccessible to all articulation, the determinations that our understanding gives to appearances cannot be based on it. All conceptual determination, therefore, needs a unified whole within which it would be implemented; otherwise it would be groundless, a mere result of human understanding making arbitrary judgments. Without an unconditioned that shows us which concept is to be applied to which phenomenon we would not have a sufficient reason to attribute any determination to the appearances. The transcendental ideal plays precisely this role of a unified “reference” in relation to which all phenomena are determined. In other words: each and every conceptual determination needs a whole¹⁵⁶ – a horizon, a framework, the whole of possibility¹⁵⁷ – in which this determination must happen, otherwise it would be the mere result of human understanding randomly throwing judgements around without rhyme or reason.¹⁵⁸ Markus Gabriel puts it excellently when he writes that the fact of thought does

154 CPR B673.

155 For a different presentation of this, see Longuenesse, B.: *Kant and the Human Standpoint*. Cambridge: 2005, p. 218 [cited henceforth as *Kant and the Human Standpoint*]

156 Compare *Kant and the Human Standpoint*, p. 218: “So this is how Kant can affirm on his own, critical grounds a “principle of complete determination”: any singular object of experience is fully determinate by virtue of its being comparable to every other possible object, i.e. by virtue of its belonging in the infinite sphere of the concept: “object of experience,” in which the concept can be related to all other concepts either positively or negatively.” and *Transcendental Ontology*, p. 11: “In order for the project of knowledge to go on, an unconditional horizon of expectation must at all times be set in place, which decides in advance what can appear as a thing in question, what can come into question in our investigation. But if things only exist for us in the horizon of an unconditioned upon which our world is grounded yet from which we are indeed cut off—for it cannot be determined as a content of the world or grasped in any propositional manner—one can say that things exist for us only insofar as we are always already beyond everything that is or could be given. Things exist for us, therefore, only on the basis of an inexorable transcendence that is the very motor of reason itself. This is why we are compelled and obliged to conceptually anticipate the whole in order to guarantee the systematic unity of our empirical data processing: without an image of the whole in mind, no authority could be derived on the basis of which we could make true statements about the whole (let alone identify false ones).”

157 CPR A572/B600

158 For more on this *Transcendental Ontology*, esp. the essay “Schelling, Hegel, and the Metaphysical Truth of Skepticism” (e.g. p. 2-15).

not necessarily imply that there is a thinker, but it does necessarily imply that there is something, some truth-conditions.¹⁵⁹ This is clearly related to Kant's claim that the transcendental ideal be the architectonic basis that determines our appearances as parts of a whole of determinations and allows our reason to function as a system, but there is more to the transcendental ideal – it determines phenomena not just architectonically as a whole, but individually.

The mode of operation of the transcendental ideal as ground for determination of individual phenomena follows from it being the regulative idea of the disjunctive syllogism: in determining a phenomenal thing, we cannot but consider it in relation to all possible predicates,¹⁶⁰ to the totality of all possible experience. The totality of all possible experience determines every single possible experience by excluding from it all that it is not the case in this experience. Because the ideal is the whole of experience, it contains within itself every possible predicate, and thus each object we are to determine can be compared to this ideal in accordance with the principle of thoroughgoing determination.¹⁶¹ The object to be determined is examined in order to attribute to it, for each possible predicate, either the predicate itself, or its opposite, its negation:

What it means is that in order to cognize a thing completely one has to cognize everything possible and determine the thing through it, whether affirmatively or negatively. Thoroughgoing determination is consequently a concept that we can never exhibit in concreto in its totality, and thus it is grounded on an idea which has its seat solely in reason, which prescribes to the understanding the rule of its complete use.¹⁶²

So, the transcendental ideal determines the whole of experience, and by determining the whole of experiences it determines individual experiences. It is, as Beatrice Longuenesse points out in her book *Kant and the Human Standpoint*, the ground of determinability in the first *Critique*.¹⁶³

However, an issue soon raises itself. The number and content of concepts is not fixed; the only non-contingent concepts are the twelve categories. In our process of determination, moreover, we can only determine the object with respect to the concepts we know of, only the ones we

159 *Antwort auf der Grundfrage*, p. 177: "Zwar folge aus der *Cogito* nicht, dass es einen Denker gibt, aber es zeige, dass es überhaupt irgendetwas, irgendwelche Wahrheitsbedingungen gibt." [English: "Yet it does not follow from the *cogito* that there is a thinker, but it shows that there is something at all, some truth conditions."]

160 In practice – to the totality of all known predicates.

161 "Every thing, however, as to its possibility, further stands under the principle of thoroughgoing determination; according to which, among all possible predicates of things, insofar as they are compared with their opposites, one must apply to it." – CPR B600.

162 CPR B601.

163 See *Kant and the Human Standpoint*, p. 218.

have formed. A complete thoroughgoing determination can never be attained because we will never be able to compare an object with the actual sum total of all possible predicates – we will never be able to cognise an actually infinite unconditioned totality of all possible predicates. In practice, therefore, we do not determine the object to be determined against the transcendental ideal itself as Kant defines it; we rather determine it against the sphere of all known concepts. This “sphere of all concepts”, being determinate just like all other conceptual structures, “fall[s] infinitely short of reaching [the transcendental ideal]”.¹⁶⁴ It is itself determined through limiting the reality of the transcendental ideal,¹⁶⁵ and so are all the concepts that make it up – they are merely aggregates, no different from the series which they determine. The transcendental ideal, however, cannot possibly be the sum of all possible determinations, because then it would be circular: if it were the sum, then in order to determine the possible determinations that make up the transcendental ideal, we would have to use the very same transcendental ideal. If the ideal were merely the sum of determinations, then Kant would have no way to explain the determinations that make up the ideal, as determination always has to be applied to appearance, to the object of the synthesis of our faculties. Kant, then, views the transcendental ideal as a “ground”, the idea of an infinite¹⁶⁶ whole, since all other things “fall infinitely short of reaching it” and since it is the “All of reality”¹⁶⁷ which contains within itself all possible predicates, themselves infinite in number. Kant claims that the transcendental ideal is a thought-entity, a concept of reason, and concepts are determined just like objects are.¹⁶⁸ A concept therefore contains a determinate set of characteristics. The transcendental ideal as ground, however, is indeterminate¹⁶⁹ – it can never be a subject of a determinate set of characteristics because it is not a limited series of

164 CPR B606.

165 “Thus all the possibility of things (as regards the synthesis of the manifold of their content) is regarded as derivative, and only that which includes all reality in it is regarded as original. For all negations (which are the sole predicates through which everything else is to be distinguished from the most real being) are mere limitations of a greater and finally of the highest reality; hence they presuppose it, and as regards their content they are merely derived from it. All manifoldness of things is only so many different ways of limiting the concept of the highest reality, which is their common substratum, just as all figures are possible only as different ways of limiting infinite space.” - CPR B606.

166 Infinite, not merely indefinite.

167 CPR B605.

168 “Every concept, in regard to what is not contained in it, is indeterminate, and stands under the principle of determinability: that of every two contradictorily opposed predicates only one can apply to it, which rests on the principle of contradiction and hence is a merely logical principle, which abstracts from every content of cognition, and has in view nothing but the logical form of cognition.” – CPR B599.

169 Kant himself calls it indeterminate: “Now although this idea of the sum total of all possibility, insofar as it grounds everything as the condition of its thoroughgoing determination in regard to the predicates which may constitute the thing, is itself still indeterminate, and through it we think nothing beyond a sum total of all possible predicates in general, we nevertheless find on closer investigation that this idea, as an original concept, excludes a multiplicity of predicates, which, as derived through others, are already given, Or cannot coexist with one another; and that it refines itself to a concept thoroughly determined a priori, and thereby becomes the concept of an individual object that is thoroughly determined merely through the idea, and then must be called an ideal of pure reason.” – CPR B601-602.

predicates, not even a series whose limit is indefinitely postponed in its positing, but an infinity of predicates. The transcendental ideal is therefore non-conceptual. We have seen that it must be an idea that is completely unlimited; if there were a concept to determine it, it would be a contradiction in terms: a concept that is indeterminate like the postulated object which it is a concept of. Moreover, the transcendental ideal cannot be conceptualized because there is no other transcendental ideal to determine it against. In other words: if the transcendental ideal were conceptualisable, it would have to be determinable against another transcendental ideal, resulting in a regress.

Kant thus leads us to a problematic concerning the conceptuality of the transcendental ideal: it needs to be, on one hand, the necessary concept posited by our reason in order to determine and regulate experience, an asymptotic ideal of unity towards which our experience tends. The transcendental ideal we must postulate thus, being a concept of our reason and a merely logical ground of determination is obviously conceptual; it is the transcendental ideal-as-sum. On the other hand, Kant also insists that the transcendental ideal is not a sum, but a ground for all our determination, one that is positively infinite and conceptually indeterminable. The difference between a ground and a sum is the difference between the infinite that can in principle have no limit, and the merely undetermined – that whose provisional limits can be extended. Kant needs to postulate the transcendental ideal as ground to avoid the circularity of the ideal – if it were only a sum of all possible determinations, then every member determination of the sum would itself require another sum to ground it, and so would the sum itself; Kant also needs it in order to set an architectonic goal towards which all systematic cognition must ideally tend in order for knowledge to be organized. There is no other way to address those systematic needs but to postulate the ideal as ground. And yet, such a ground cannot be given by our reason. In effect, when Kant insists that our reason has to postulate the transcendental ideal as a ground he insists that our reason, a faculty which deals in concepts, has to postulate a non-conceptual non-determinable “I-know-not-what”. It is not clear at all that our reason is able to make this postulation while staying within its limits and not going outside itself.

This is the “hole in Kant’s critique” Schelling brings up in the *Grounding* lectures, that which reason is forced to posit and is “therefore set outside itself, absolutely ecstatic”.¹⁷⁰ Schelling uncovers the conflict with Kant’s reason: in order to ground our determinations, our reason needs to postulate a ground which it itself is incapable of determining, and it is thus not clear at all that it is capable of postulating it. All it is capable of determining and postulating is the transcendental ideal as sum, which would be inadequate for grounding determinations. Kant is

170 GPP, p. 207. SW XIII, 163: “die Vernunft ist daher in diesem Setzen außer sich gesetzt, absolut ekstatisch.”

left to either postulate, through reason, an ideal inadequate for reason's purposes or attempt to somehow integrate into his system an ideal which is adequate, and yet completely foreign to reason;¹⁷¹ he cannot do both because he cannot articulate the relationship of our reason to the ineffable ideal his system demands, and yet he postulates it. It would not be an exaggeration to say that that Schelling has been preoccupied with this conflict at the heart of the first *Critique* since the very beginning of his philosophical career: according to Pyotr Rezvykh, an attempt to grapple with this conflict is behind the postulation of the double series of realism and idealism already in Schelling's earliest works. In this double series, realism considers the transcendental ideal as sum, and idealism – the transcendental ideal as ground.¹⁷² The later Schelling develops this a step further, and concludes: by postulating the ideal, Kant gets himself an absolute – stubbornly insisting that this absolute does not have such a status. He insists that the transcendental ideal is just an idea – which is at that non-conceptual and indeterminable, thus exceeding the limits of an idea. We have a contradiction in the middle of Kant's project: if the ideal were to be “just an idea”, it would not be able to ground thought. And yet, if it is to be made non-conceptual, it would exceed its system: it would be unthinkable, but necessary for thought – a real absolute. Kant needs two contradictory things from the ideal: it's either a sum which does not exist outside of the limits of his system, but cannot ground predication, or it is an absolute ground, which cannot fit within the confines of Kant's project. Kant – a Kantian – has to choose: the critique is either unfinished or proves its own limitations. Either way, the *Critique* hits a limit – Kant has shown us a point at which reason is drawn beyond itself, at which, while treating its own operations, reason reaches an abyss and must face unreason.

II. Unprethinkable Being

This critique is where Schelling's *Grounding* picks up. Multiple scholars have remarked on the significance of Kant's doctrine of the transcendental ideal for Schelling, among them Hogebe, Gabriel and Rezvykh. Hermann Schrödter writes that *Potenzenlehre* are an attempt to give a better account of the transcendental ideal¹⁷³ – to resolve the aforementioned tension between the ideal as sum and the ideal as ground by redefining the framework into which it fits so that it could truly be both a sum and a ground. I agree with this assessment with an addition: it is not just the *Potenzenlehre* which helps Schelling resolve the tension of Kant's

171 A-conceptuality and indeterminacy are not themselves conceptual determinations here for Kant, since it is the understanding which conceptually determines objects, while the transcendental ideal (or any transcendental idea for that matter) is not an object of the understanding. At most, what those two notions conceptually determine is the relation between our faculties and the transcendental ideal.

172 See Rezvykh, P.: “Absolyutnoe Utverzhdienie i Usloviya Smysla”. In Boldyrev, I. A. (Ed.): *Kultura i Forma: k 60-letiyu A.L. Dobrokhotova*, Moscow: 2010, p. 94-128, esp. p. 116-117, [cited as *Absolyutnoe Utverzhdienie*].

173 *Grundlagen der Lehre*, p. 563.

Transcendental Dialectic, but also the positive-negative philosophy distinction. This will be explored in the chapters to follow.

For Schelling, as for Kant, the transcendental ideal is a necessary terminus of reason, insofar as reason examines itself as its own object. If there is to be a pure science of reason, and if reason is to direct this science inwards to study itself, it will find, in its own operation, something which Schelling calls “Prius oder, was dasselbe ist, das Subjekt *alles* [sic] Seyns”.¹⁷⁴ This *prius* reason finds within itself cannot be a real entity, seeing as it is discovered within reason.¹⁷⁵ There also can be no actual knowledge of this *prius*, since it is unlimited, and hence not fully determinable and knowable in principle. It, the basal content of reason, is that which Schelling calls the infinite “pure potency of cognition [*reine Potenz des Erkennens*]”.¹⁷⁶ This is equivalent to Kant’s transcendental ideal as a regulative idea of reason, and Schelling here develops his train of thought consonantly with Kant’s dilemma of the transcendental ideal: the ideal is a certain determinate idea, which at the same time can never really be determinate, since it is unconditioned. A similar state of affairs holds for the potency of cognition – it is a certain capacity of our faculties, which Schelling claims is infinite. Yet, an infinite potency of being corresponds to it – the potency which this potency of cognition can cognise, and towards which it asymptotically tends.¹⁷⁷ Schelling thus re-situates this ambivalence between the transcendental ideal as sum and the transcendental ideal as ground within the frame of his own philosophical endeavours.¹⁷⁸

174 SW XIII, 57; GPP, p. 128: “the prius or the subject of all being”.

175 SW XIII, 66 “Indem nun aber die unendliche Potenz sich als das Prius dessen verhält, was durch ihr Uebergehen in das Seyn dem Denken entsteht, und da der unendlichen Potenz nichts Geringeres als eben *alles* Seyn entspricht, so ist die Vernunft dadurch, daß sie diese Potenz besitzt, aus der ihr alles Wirkliche hervorgehen kann, und zwar besitzt als ihren mit ihr selbst verwachsenen, ihr unentreibbaren Inhalt, dadurch ist sie in die *apriorische* Stellung gegen alles Seyn gesetzt, und man begreift insofern, wie es eine apriorische Wissenschaft gibt, eine Wissenschaft, die a priori alles bestimmt, *was* ist (nicht *daß* es ist), und die Vernunft ist auf diese Art in den Stand gesetzt, von sich aus, ohne irgendwie die Erfahrung zu Hülfe zu nehmen, zum *Inhalt* alles Existirenden, und demnach zum Inhalt alles wirklichen Seyns zu gelangen - nicht daß sie a priori erkannte, daß dieß oder jenes wirklich existirt (denn dieß ist eine ganz andere Sache), sondern daß sie nur a priori weiß, was ist oder was seyn kann, wenn etwas ist, a priori die Begriffe alles Seyenden bestimmt.” For English see GPP, p. 134.

176 SW XIII, 63. The English (GPP, p. 132) has “potential of cognition”. I will render this as “potency of cognition” throughout.

177 See, on the infinite potency of cognition and its content, the infinite potency of being, SW XIII, 74-75 and 77-78. Also see *Pozdny Schelling*, p. 294: “Hence the sum of hierarchically organised possibilities is preceded by indefinite being, without which those possibilities cannot be structured or realised. The concept of sum of all possibles itself points to this being and makes us consider the sum’s relation to this being as something real, not merely logical.” Translation mine, the original quote is as follows: “Таким образом, совокупности иерархически упорядоченных возможностей предшествует неопределенное существование, без которого эти возможности ни структурированы, ни реализованы быть не могут. Само понятие совокупности всего возможного отсылает к этому существованию и побуждает нас рассматривать ее отношение к этому существованию не как логическое, а как реальное.”

178 See here Bruce Mathews’ introduction to his *Grounding of Positive Philosophy*: “Because Kant’s methodology can only synthesize this idea as the result of a process of complete determination *qua* negation, he is forced to presuppose this idea as the *positive ground* of his entire critical edifice (not to mention all

In Schelling's *Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, the above considerations regarding the transcendental ideal are largely taken for granted and are not elaborated at length, as Schelling takes it that philosophy has to start from Kant and yet admit that it cannot unfold in self-contained emptiness, without an absolute, without facing an abyss in its midst. Schelling diagnoses the problem with Kant's philosophical edifice in the following passage:

Auf diese Weise hat Kant den absolut immanenten Begriff, den des höchsten Wesens (denn alles andere ist nur relativ immanent, inwiefern es in das Seyn übergehen kann) und den absolut transscendenten Begriff (den des nothwendig Existirenden) nur als unverbunden nebeneinander, beide als Vernunftbegriffe, ohne daß er dieß Nebeneinanderseyn erklären kann. Hier ist in Kants Kritik wirklich eine Lücke. Aber beide Begriffe müssen wohl aneinander grenzen, da der erste (der des höchsten Wesens) das Ende der negativen Philosophie, der andere (der des nothwendig Existirenden) der Anfang der positiven Philosophie ist.¹⁷⁹

An immanent critique of reason is merely a negative philosophy, and it needs to expand itself into the positive, into an ontology, even if it is to focus on something like the ontology of predication. A negative philosophy, being a philosophy of self-contained reason, does the only thing reason can do: it limits. Here it limits thought: it tells us what the thing-in-itself is not and that we cannot know it. Kant's philosophy only lets us think about possible experience¹⁸⁰ (this is a characteristic feature of the negative), and no amount of thinking about possible experience will let us think about experience that is actual. Being negative, Kant's philosophy also cannot address that which it must address – the ground of all reason, which is by definition that which is non-reason and stands outside it – being.¹⁸¹

predication, and therewith, language itself). Here we arrive at what Schelling considered to be the most serious problem in Kant's conception of the transcendental ideal, namely, Kant's failure to explain how the idea of God could be *both* ground and sum of his system. The root of this problem lies in Kant's failure to distinguish between that which necessarily exists (ground) and the most supreme being (sum *qua* *Inbegriff*). – Matthews, B.: "Translator's Introduction", in: F.W.J. Schelling: *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures*, New York: 2007, p. 1-84, here p. 45 [henceforth cited as: *Matthews' Introduction*].

179 SW XIII, 168; *GPP*, p. 207-208: "Kant failed to connect the absolutely immanent concept, that of the most supreme being (for everything else is only relatively immanent to the extent that it can pass over into being), and the absolutely transcendent concept (of that which necessarily exists), leaving one beside the other, both as concepts of reason, but without being able to explain their being beside one another. Here there really is a hole in Kant's critique. Yet both concepts must limit one another, because the first (that of the most supreme being) is the end of the negative philosophy, and the other (of that which necessarily exists) is the starting point of the positive philosophy."

180 Hindrichs, G.: *Das Absolute und das Subjekt*, Frankfurt/Main: 2008, p. 105-106.

181 Compare for example *Matthews' Introduction*, p. 20: "Under threat of circularity, the ground of consciousness cannot itself be consciousness, just as the ground of reason cannot itself be located within reason, and the ground of reflexivity cannot itself be accounted for in reflexive terms. The attempt of such an immanent grounding, as we will see, always proves circular and thus futile." Schelling himself writes about this irrationality in the *Grounding* (SW XIII, p. 163 and for English *GPP*, p. 204): "Kant nennt die unbedingte Nothwendigkeit, deren wir, wie er sagt, als des Trägers aller Dinge so unentbehrlich bedürfen (Kant hat hiebei unstreitig jenes bekannte Argument vor Augen: Wenn irgend etwas existirt, und zum mindestens existire ich selbst, so muß auch irgend etwas seyn, was nothwendig, was grundlos existirt) – Kant nennt die unbedingte, allem Denken vorausgehende Nothwendigkeit des Seyns den wahren Abgrund für die menschliche Vernunft."

Now that the necessity to uncover this abyss, the ground of reason, raises itself, the importance of each a negative philosophy, a positive philosophy and a convincing articulation of the relation between the two becomes evident, for how else to address both the ground of reason – that which is – as ground and as the ground of *reason*? A prospective positive philosophy starts where the negative ends – at the point which the negative is unable to articulate, from “ontological excess”. It starts at the intersection of existence (so, positivity) and predication. Pyotr Rezvykh has convincingly demonstrated that Schelling ascribes to positive philosophy a special kind of knowledge, namely *emphatic* knowledge. This kind of knowledge is described to operate according to a principle similar to that of Kant’s thoroughgoing determination.¹⁸² In the *Einleitung in die Philosophie* of 1830 Schelling writes about this kind of knowledge as based on comparing the actual to the sum total of all reality.¹⁸³ Emphatic knowledge is not merely the determinate difference between a certain possibility and all others, but the difference between this certain possibility as actual and all unactualised merely possible possibilities. Schelling writes about this kind of knowledge also in the *Philosophie der Mythologie*:

Denn der wahre Sinn des Ausdrucks: etwas seyn ist eben dieser. Wenn nämlich das Seyn **cum emphasi** gesagt wird, so ist der Ausdruck: etwas seyn = dem, diesem Etwas Subjekt seyn. Das ist, die Copula in jedem Satze, z. B. in dem Satze: A ist B, wenn sie nämlich überhaupt bedeutend, emphatisch, d. h. die Copula eines wirklichen Urtheils ist, so bedeutet, “A ist B” so viel als: A ist dem B Subjekt, d. h. es ist nicht selbst und seiner Natur nach B (in diesem Fall wäre der Satz eine leere Tautologie), sondern: A ist das auch nicht B seyn Könnende.¹⁸⁴

We can see Schelling’s meaning restated here: the emphatic concerns itself with actual existence, with actualised possibilities, and hence with the topics of positive philosophy. It is also – as we can see from Schelling’s emphasis on the thoroughgoing comparison – dependent on the transcendental ideal as ground of determination, but only if the transcendental ideal is taken to be actually existent. Emphatic knowledge is the knowledge of actual existents, ultimately, a positive predication. Kant’s first *Critique* ends at the transcendental ideal as an infinite potential of cognition; it is unable to accept it as really existing. A positive philosophy should start there, ontologising the transcendental ideal, i.e. positing the transcendental ideal as existing. Malte Krüger, in his book *Göttliche Freiheit*, puts it as follows: Kant treats his

182 See *Pozdny Schelling i Kant*, p. 280-282.

183 See Schelling writing on emphatic knowledge in Schelling, F.W.J., *Einleitung in der Philosophie* (Schellingiana, Bd. 1), Ed. Walter E. Erhardt, Stuttgart – Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog (1989), p 17-18.

184 SW XII, 53. English: “For the true sense of the expression: to be something is precisely this. If, namely, being is to be said **cum emphasi**, the expression: to be something = to be a subject to it, to this something. That is, the copula in the sentence “A is B”, if it is at all meaningful, emphatic, i.e. is the copula of an actual judgement, then “A is B” means as much as: A is the subject relation to B, i.e. it is not according to itself and its nature B (in this case the sentence would have been an empty tautology), but: A is that which also can be not B.”

considerations concerning the transcendental ideal merely hypothetically, while Schelling takes the ideal to be the real condition of all possibility.¹⁸⁵ Schelling takes this ontologising to be a completely legitimate philosophical step: in a well-grounded philosophical enterprise, we are to begin within cognition, and the only way to move beyond the sphere of cognition to the sphere of being, i.e., the only way to begin thinking about what actually exists is to postulate actual being as actually existing.¹⁸⁶ As Schelling puts it, discussing the relation between the two philosophies: “Das, was der eigentliche Gegenstand der positiven wird, bleibt in der vorausgehenden [der negativen – *DK*] als das nicht mehr Erkennbare stehen [...]”¹⁸⁷ Or, to have it put even more clearly, the negative philosophy gives the positive a demand, not a principle – the demand to know the prius of that infinite potency of being that is at the centre of reason.¹⁸⁸ It is up to the positive philosophy to fulfill the demand.¹⁸⁹ Since philosophy sets its own object of inquiry, the negative “hands over” its object to the positive. The transcendental ideal is that which should conclude all synthesis (since it is the sum of all predication), but it is also that from which all synthesis should start in order for anything definite to be synthesised – it is the transcendental condition of synthesis. It is the horizon of our thought which determines everything that could appear to us. We determine objects by putting them against it. The starting point of positive philosophy is thus the infinite potency of being, taken as actually existing potency:

Das Letzte nun aber, was existiren kann, ist die Potenz, die nicht mehr Potenz, sondern, weil das Seyende selbst, reiner Actus ist; wir könnten sie darum die

185 See *Göttliche Freiheit*, pp. 114-115. Daniel Sollberger, moreover, claims that Schelling changes the way Kant poses the question about the transcendental ideal (a logical-transcendental way) and makes it into a transcendental-genetic. See Sollberger, D.: *Metaphysik und Invention. Die Wirklichkeit in den Suchbewegungen negativen und positiven Denkens in F.W.J. Schellings Spätphilosophie*, Würzburg: 1996, p. 243 [cited henceforth as *Metaphysik und Invention*].

186 See Schelling on this in SW XII 74-75.

187 SW XIII, *GPP*, p. 153: “That which will be the proper object of the positive remains stuck in the preceding philosophy as that which is no longer capable of being known.

188 Schelling calls the transcendental ideal the “infinite potency of being”, because it is that which gets “potentiated” with all possible determinations, i.e., determinations are produced out of it.”

189 “Und so wird auf dem Punkt ihrer höchsten Entwicklung die dem Menschen so tief eingepflanzte und unüberwindliche Neigung zu begreifen auch wohl verlangen, nicht bloß hinter diese oder jene Sache, sondern hinter das Seyn überhaupt zu kommen, zu sehen, nicht was über, denn dieß ist ein ganz anderer Begriff, aber was jenseits des Seyns ist. Es kommt also einmal dahin, wo der Mensch nicht etwa bloß von der Offenbarung, sondern von allem Wirklichen sich frei zu machen hat, um in eine völlige Wüste alles Seyns zu fliehen wo nichts irgendwie Wirkliches, sondern nur noch die unendliche Potenz alles Seyns anzutreffen ist, der einzige unmittelbare Inhalt des Denkens, mit dem dieses sich nur in sich selbst, in seinem eignen Aether bewegt. An eben diesem aber hat die Vernunft auch, was ihr die völlig apriorische Stellung gegen alles Seyn gibt, so daß sie von jenem aus nicht nur ein Seyendes überhaupt, sondern das gesammte Seyn in allen seltenen Abstufungen zu erkennen vermag. Denn in der unendlichen, d. h. noch übrigens unbestimmten, Potenz entdeckt sich unmittelbar, und zwar nicht als ein zufälliger, sondern nothwendiger, jener innere Organismus aufeinanderfolgender Potenzen, an dem sie den Schlüssel zu allem Seyn hat, und der der innere Organismus der Vernunft selbst ist. Diesen Organismus zu enthüllen, ist Sache der rationalen Philosophie.” – SW XIII, 76. For English, see *GPP*, p. 142.

seyende Potenz nennen.¹⁹⁰

If we want to answer the demands of negative philosophy and ground reason in the positive, we are to think the transcendental ideal/infinite potency as actually existing – Schelling begins to call it “unprethinkable being” [*unvordenkliche Sein*]¹⁹¹). This endeavour, as the name suggests would be difficult, but we will have to at least think “around it”. In light of this circumspection, it is legitimate to wonder whether it is warranted to think of the unprethinkable as a being (and not as a principle of unprethinkability of being) and how exactly such a being (or, indeed, principle) can be thought at all.

Everything that appears to us is determinable. That is the only reason why it appears to us – it is distinguishable from everything else. Its distinguishability from everything else, however, is operative only in light of some whole which is. The unprethinkable, our horizon of thought, is this “everything else”. As Markus Gabriel puts it in his book *Transcendental Ontologies*,

Things exist for us, therefore, only on the basis of an inexorable transcendence that is the very motor of reason itself. This is why we are compelled and obliged to conceptually anticipate the whole in order to guarantee the systematic unity of our empirical data processing: without an image of the whole in mind, no authority could be derived on the basis of which we could make true statements about the whole (let alone identify false ones).¹⁹²

As we have seen from the previous discussion about Kant’s transcendental dialectic and Schelling’s positive/negative philosophy distinction – the unprethinkable being is necessary because we need it for determination. Moreover, it is not just an *epistemologically necessary* idea, since it is not a concept, which makes it *metaphysically necessary*.¹⁹³

190 SW XIII, 155; *GPP*, p. 198: “The ultimate [das Letzte] that can exist, however, is the potency that is no longer potency but, rather, since it is being itself, is pure actus; for this reason we could call it the existing potency [die seyende Potenz].”

191 See for instance *Andere Deduktion der Prinzipien der positiven Philosophie*, SW XIV 337: “Unser Ausgangspunkt ist das allem Denken zuvor, das unbedingt Existierende. Die Aufgabe ist, in diesem allein Vorausgegebenen, dem unbedingten Seyn oder Existieren (denn eigentlich nur dieses sehen wir im Anfang, das *Was* in ihm ist uns noch verborgen), unsere Aufgabe ist, eben in jenem allein Vorausgegebenen die eigentliche Monas, d. h. das Bleibende, das über allem stehende Princip zu finden; denn ob dieses schon mit dem allem Denken vorausgehenden Seyn, das wir das unvordenkliche Seyn nennen wollen, ob also die Monas schon mit dem unvordenklichen Seyn gefunden sey, ist eben die Frage.” [English: “Our starting point is the unconditioned existent, prior to all thought. Our task is to find in this pre-given, this unconditioned being or existence, the true Monas, i.e. the enduring, that principle which stands over everything. For whether this is already found with that being which precedes all thought, i.e. if the Monas is already to be found with the unprethinkable being - that is precisely the question.”]

192 *Transcendental Ontology*, p.11.

193 “Unprethinkable being is thus logical-ontological, which means: epistemically and metaphysically necessary. It can neither not be, nor not be thought. And yet, and this is Schelling’s decisive point, it is contingent. For, it is presupposed for all determinate thought, that is, the set of all assertorical judgments $F(x)$, $G(y)$, and so forth. It is, however, only first established as a presupposition when a predicative ambience has been constituted.” – *Ibid.*, p. 87

The peculiar character of unprethinkable being moreover suggests that it is completely undeterminable – it is not a concept, but neither is it just an object because it is the whole, a condition for the object’s very appearance. Everything that is – whether a concept or an object – is equal to itself and different from that which it is not. This much is a property of even the unknowable thing-in-itself in Kant’s system, insofar as it is a theoretical postulate. Unprethinkable being, on the other hand, cannot be determined, and is therefore not equal to itself or unequal to its other. There is no “itself” for it to be identical to because in order for it to have an identity it would have to be determined and therefore limited. There is also no “other” for it to differ from; it encompasses all otherness¹⁹⁴. We cannot even give it a negative determination, for instance “that which is *not* conceptual”, “*not* an object”, “*not* given” or “*undetermined*” (the latter would entail a contradiction, among other things). The unprethinkable being is not given *as something* for it to be determined or definite in the first place and it therefore cannot be the object of a judgment. We seek to determine or define something by attributing to it predicates through judgment, and while judging, we make the object definite or finite. The unprethinkable being, however, cannot be definite, because for every thought it grounds, it contains the thought’s other. Even if there were a judgment made about the unprethinkable being, this being – it, as it is, the ground of thought as it grounds thought – would not be the object of a judgment. It can be made into the object of a judgment only after it is reified, and once it is reified, it is no longer the unprethinkable being that we were after, it is an entity already set against the background of the unprethinkable being which we tried to grasp through this entity, but ultimately could not.

The unprethinkable being, then, is only known to us in the process of a continuous “belated withdrawal”.¹⁹⁵ Belated withdrawal here simply means that all attempts to determine unprethinkable being by abstracting from a thought we have and examining the ground of this thought, i.e., the unprethinkable being, are doomed to fail: there is no way we could determine it. Every time we abstract from a thought to arrive at its ground, the result is a reified ground,

194 “As a presupposition of understanding determinacy, unprethinkable being turns out to be at the very least epistemically necessary. But it is also metaphysically necessary, because every single thing that exists is distinguished from everything else it is not. Otherwise, something could take place that could, potentially, not be itself. This condition cannot be satisfied by unprethinkable being that is thus paradoxically “unequal to itself.” For this reason, “unprethinkable being” is not a proper concept, because everything determinate that takes place, that is, everything that can be conceptualized in any manner whatsoever, must at least be itself, not anything else. Self-identity presupposes negation and therefore relationality. Relation and difference determine existence. However—and here is the crucial move—this ontological axiom does not apply to unprethinkable being itself, to the unknown x.” - Ibid, p.87

195 Ibid, p.19: “Thus, without the flawed view of knowledge of the world as a relation between two objects or two kinds of objects, we could not get to the correct view, which integrates the very indeterminacy of the transitory moments of knowledge into our conception of knowledge. All of this can be called an attempt of the infinite (aka the absolute, the world, the domain of all domains, eternal freedom, the unconditioned, etc.) to finitise itself in order to become aware of its true infinity, its being nothing but a belated withdrawal.”

a ground-in-thought already thought against the background of unprethinkable being, which has “withdrawn” from our attempt to determine it into its initial position of unprethinkability. All we can grasp is a thought, but a thought cannot also be the ground of thinking. The fact that the unprethinkable is forever locked in belated withdrawal, however, does not make it into a transcendent beyond that is forbidden to all access. Unprethinkable being is most definitely transcendent – it is straightforwardly beyond all thought, thought cannot think it, at least not without making it withdraw – and yet it is “not some transcendent *je ne sais quoi*”¹⁹⁶ – in that sense, Schelling’s unprethinkable being is not a return to pre-Kantian metaphysics. The only sense in which unprethinkable being is transcendent is that it eludes us, that no matter what predicates we use to define it, it withdraws from definition.¹⁹⁷ This pushes us towards the answer to a question we raised previously in this chapter: should the unprethinkable, despite Schelling calling it “unprethinkable being”, be rather considered an actual (actually operating) principle of being, and not an entity? The current considerations allow us to answer this question provisionally as follows: unprethinkable being is not amenable to any determination, so construing it as an entity is decidedly mistaken. It is somewhat fruitful to read it as the principle of unprethinkability of being – the fact that being has a character such that it pre-exists thinking and grounds thinking without it (being) becoming fully determinate (so, such that there is an excess of being over thinking) and while staying in a relationship of belated withdrawal to thinking. The unprethinkable, the way it appears in Schelling’s critique of Kant, is not absolute in the classical sense of an unconditional necessary being – the fact that its transcendence is specifically in constant belated withdrawal, so that it is not amenable to conceptual determination as a being and escapes its own determination, clarifies this.¹⁹⁸ It is only in this sense that the unprethinkable is transcendent. However, it is also undeniable that Schelling talks about unprethinkable being ontologically – to break out of the Kantian dilemma of sum vs. ground, a fact is not enough without this fact being rooted in being. It would be useful here to examine some textual evidence as to Schelling using unprethinkable being to refer to being – not *a* being, not an entity, but being, before thought and before determination, and also not merely a fact about being. First, when examining Schelling’s

196 Ibid, p.85

197 Ibid, p.33: “Transcendence depends on immanence; it is nothing but the failure of absolute theoretical closure. Transcendence is the very contingency of all ways in which the infinite withdraws in our efforts of grasping it.”

198 Ibid., 33: “Transcendence depends on immanence; it is nothing but the failure of absolute theoretical closure. Transcendence is the very contingency of all ways in which the infinite withdraws in our efforts of grasping it.” See also *Zum Verständnis der Potenzenlehre*, p. 117: “Das absolute Prius als absolut unvordenklich ist dem Denken und ist so auch allem Was, allem Wesen vorausgedacht, reiner Actus. Als solches ist es aber doch nur *im* Denken da; ohne das Denken, ohne die es als über allem Begriff begreifende Helle wäre es nicht wahrhaft das Prius [...]” [English: “The absolute Prius as absolutely unprethinkable is pure Actus to thinking and hence thought in advance of all whatness, all essence. As such it *is* however only there in thought; without thought, without a comprehending clarity which is over all concept, it is not truly the Prius...”]

oeuvre at large, one will notice that Schelling uses the word “unprethinkable” not just in conjunction with “being”: there are, in Schelling, unprethinkable decisions (SW VIII, 197), mythology as unprethinkable religion (SW XI, 245), the unprethinkable mystery of divinity (SW XII, 59), and even a discussion of the “unprethinkable daughter of Zeus” (SW XII, 336). If decisions, religions and mysteries can be unprethinkable, then the expression “unprethinkable being” likely refers to being that is unprethinkable, as opposed to a merely fact about being. At one of these aforementioned points, unprethinkable is defined as “allem Denken zuvorkommende”,¹⁹⁹ that which precedes all thought, and the *Andere Deduktion des Prinzipien der positiven Philosophie* furthermore directly points out that “unprethinkable being” does indeed refer to being, namely that being which is before thought: “dem allem Denken vorausgehenden Seyn, das wir das unvordenkliche Seyn nennen wollen”.²⁰⁰ To sum up what will be henceforth reflected throughout this text in the discussions of the unprethinkable: the unprethinkable being is not an entity; when Schelling is discussing unprethinkable being, he discusses being along with the feature of its unprethinkability. This “unprethinkability of being” is the fact that being functions as the horizon of our thinking, and is never fully graspable, always withdrawing and unified. Unprethinkable being, in turn, refers to being antecedent to thought, marked by the fact of its unprethinkability. Markus Gabriel, in his Aarhus lectures, goes against this assessment and against the textual evidence from the *Andere Deduktion* quoted above, as he calls unprethinkable being “the very fact that philosophical thought is initially ungrounded”²⁰¹ and argues that Schelling replaces Kant’s transcendental ideal with “logical space”,²⁰² i.e. that unprethinkable being is purely a fact and does not refer to being. Be it as it may, all these considerations, including the distinction between unprethinkable being and the fact of being’s unprethinkability should be kept in mind in preparation for chapter IV, where the unprethinkable being will return and be evaluated again in light of the positive-negative philosophy distinction. There we will also revisit Markus Gabriel’s discussion of unprethinkable being in the Aarhus lectures.

199 SW XI, 245.

200 SW XIV, 337. [English: “the being which precedes thought, which we want to call unprethinkable”]

201 Gabriel, M.: “Aarhus Lectures First Lecture: Schelling and Contemporary Philosophy”. In *SATS – North European Journal of Philosophy*, 2013, vol. 14(1), pp. 70-101, [Cited in what follows as *Aarhus I*], p. 77

202 See Gabriel, M.: “Aarhus Lectures, Third Lecture: The Prospects of Schelling’s Critique of Hegel”. In *SATS – North European Journal of Philosophy*, 2015, vol. 16(1), pp. 114-137, [Cited in what follows as *Aarhus III*], p. 125: “Schelling agrees with Kant that there is no such individual object. However, he disagrees with him in that he understands the ideal not as a completely determined object but rather as a contingently existing entity: logical space. Logical space does not exist necessarily, as a function of certain assumptions about complete determination of objects.”

For now, it is crucially important to note that unprethinkable being is only sought for after thought has emerged as a given, although it is what grounds thinking.²⁰³ The ongoing investigation of this chapter shows that if there is thought, there is unprethinkable being; moreover, that there cannot but be unprethinkable being, if there is thought – it is in this sense necessary. However, if it *were* not for thought, if thought *were* not – unprethinkable being would not necessarily have to be, and the existence of thought is contingent. Therefore: the unprethinkable being is contingent on the existence of thought; it is only posited retroactively of necessity once there is thought.

Nevertheless, the unprethinkable is a starting point for an ontology – that which post-Kantian thinkers thought Kant had laid to rest. It is also a completely contingent starting point, there is no necessity at all about where a positive metaphysics which takes the unprethinkable being as its starting point should head. This contingency of the absolute and the contingency of the paths which open and branch out from it make Schelling view the history of metaphysics as a progressive generation of possible absolutes, each of which is, however, constitutive of unprethinkable being as a possibility.²⁰⁴ The unprethinkable being is also in its use constitutive of knowledge, as we have seen. Human knowledge is taken by Schelling to be the project to determine the whole i.e. – the unprethinkable being, insofar as the whole is the ideal of cognition towards which reason tends (for Kant) and the “ultimate potency for cognition” we strive towards (for Schelling). It does not matter that the striving, in all its attempts, fails to capture the unprethinkable being and that unprethinkable being is in principle not capturable in thought. The failure of knowledge to capture its ultimate goal does not however mean that the search for knowledge is *ipso facto* an enterprise doomed to failure; rather this failure is constitutive of knowledge just as it is constitutive of thought. Moreover, it constitutes knowledge as that which is immune to closure: since the “whole”, the unprethinkable being, which is the ultimate goal of knowledge is constantly withdrawing, the process of knowing does not end: there is no point at which there is a finite set of propositions (or even non-propositional elements, whatever those might be) that constitute the whole of our knowledge. It is in this light that Schelling makes positive philosophy one that will study the historical

203 Gabriel agrees that unprethinkable being is defined in this way in relation to thought (see Gabriel, M. and Žižek, pp.: *Mythology, Madness and Laughter. Subjectivity in German Idealism*, London/New York: 2009, p. 89, [henceforth cited as *Mythology, Madness and Laughter*]), but he warns against terminological confusions: to call the unprethinkable “unprethinkable” is already a determination. See *ibid.*, p. 57: “Unprethinkable Being ceases to be unprethinkable Being as soon as thought is established. In Schellingian terms, unprethinkable Being turns into the first potency.” More on the relation between unprethinkable being and the first potency in chapters II, V and VI.

204 See *ibid.*, p.15: According to Schelling, all finite knowledge of the determinate is resultant of the effort to define the infinite. Thus, every successful predication misses its goal, as it were, but in a constitutive manner. Every predication aims at a definition of what was indefinite for knowledge before its attempt to grasp it in concepts. Therefore, knowledge claims delimit the infinite and always already miss it.”

evolution of the unprethinkable being. Since there is no closure, this evolution is all a positive philosophy can study, and it is all it needs to study. Through studying this evolution, positive philosophy is studying the world, since the world is nothing but “a process of the constitution of determinacy.”²⁰⁵ The evolution of the unprethinkable being is the evolution of the world-whole, and thus the evolution of knowledge. Moreover, being, according to Schelling, is not inherently meaningful.²⁰⁶ It is given sense only in its self-mediation in thought. A thinking being thinks being (that, which is it itself and otherwise) and gives it sense. On this view of being and meaning, the goal of knowledge – this “whole” knowledge seeks to attain – is being’s absolute self-mediation in thought. Each attempt to think unprethinkable being is a step forward in being’s self-mediation, until we attain the very end of the evolution of unprethinkable being, where absolute self-mediation stands. In any case, we can see that the path towards absolute self-mediation and knowledge of the world is open-ended and has multiple metaphysical routes open for navigation. In the end, philosophy as constitution of the world is to proceed historically, where as long as metaphysicians keep in mind the limitations of their attempts to encompass unprethinkable being, their attempts are constitutively valuable – something which will be returned to and clarified through clarifying the relation between positive and negative philosophies in chapter IV. However, Schelling’s idea of unprethinkable being and its juxtaposition at the touching point between the infinite potency of thinking and the infinite potency of being (or the transcendental ideal as ground and the transcendental ideal as sum) calls us to explore further the way Schelling resolves the tension between those two poles of potency or ideal, so that we can see how Schelling attempts produce a true onto-epistemology operating at both the logical and the ontological levels. This project of his also calls us, with renewed force, to look at the relationship between the negative philosophy (pure rational, logical) and the positive (that of existence). The next chapter of this work takes a step in this direction and attempts to reconstruct Schelling’s onto-epistemology: it takes a closer look at Schelling’s *Potenzenlehre*, and hence only considers the infinite potencies of thinking and being, with an emphasis on the former. The chapter unfolds in the framework of discussing mechanisms of predication according to Schelling’s *Potenzenlehre*.

205 Ibid., p. 100.

206 Ibid, pp. 95-96: “Because no thought, and therefore no dimension of sense, can anticipate or preempt being, being itself is, in a determinate sense, senseless. Being goes before all sense and is therefore the unassailable presupposition of all sense: only in this way does being as such have a meaning, that is, it can only be captured under a determinate description as that which is included as excluded. [...] The sense-making activity of subjectivity entails that the world in itself, that is, the world without subjects, must be senseless, subordinates the world once again to a category of sense, namely that of senselessness. The senselessness of existence itself comes into existence only belatedly, that is, only through and as a moment of the self-mediation of subjectivity as a field of sense. The starting point of self-mediation can itself be called senseless only from the vantage of self-mediation and its sensemaking activity.”

II

The Chain of Potencies

Having outlined the need and motivation for exploring the core potency structure of Schelling's *Potenzenlehre*, I will now turn to carrying out this task. This core structure consists of three elements. These are called, in the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* "Arten des Seyns" and "Elemente des Seyns" – "kinds of being" and "elements of being".²⁰⁷ Schelling speaks of being constituted in terms of potencies ever since the *Identitätsphilosophie*, and being for him, at this stage of his philosophical life, is in this process of constitution. As I have mentioned in the introduction to this text – it is not that the potencies are something, but rather that they do something; they are functional. In the introduction, I have made clear that Schelling uses potencies in a way too flexible and diverse for them to refer to substances or categories – they can be gods, forces or ages – describing them instead in terms of their relations to each other, relations dependant on interaction. This is why I choose to read the potencies as functional. In order to see how exactly I use the term "functional" here, it is helpful to look for parallels at Markus Gabriel's *Fields of Sense*, where the concept of functionality is introduced and best discussed as part of the definition of the "functional concept of objecthood", described as follows:

According to this concept, objects fulfil the function of appearing in a field of sense. To be an object is not to have a specific nature such as the specific nature to be a thing, where a 'thing' is a spatiotemporal material physical object like a car or a star.²⁰⁸

Gabriel's point is here that an object is an object not in virtue of being something, but in virtue of a doing (insofar as manifesting is a doing), namely, appearing in a certain field of sense and having a certain relation to it. Similarly, for the purposes of Schelling's *Potenzenlehre*, something is a potency in virtue of it taking a certain role or occupying a certain placeholder, standing in relation to other potencies, which in turn take a certain role in relation to it. This reading, which constitutes the operating hypothesis of this work, will be strengthened in this following chapter, which will present a coherent interpretation of Schelling's potency doctrine based on this hypothesis. To rephrase once again: in this chapter and work, potencies will be treated as different kinds of activity with different roles, i.e. different functionalities. It will be shown that this hypothesis corresponds perfectly with the letter and spirit of Schelling's texts discussed here – the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* and the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie*.

207 SW XI 302.

208 Gabriel, M. *Fields of Sense*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2005. P. 167.

The elements of the *Potenzenlehre* are symbolised, in different Schelling texts, as either -A, +A and $\pm A$ or as A, A^2 and A^3 . As I will argue towards the closing of this chapter, Schelling's usage of these two different symbolisation notations at different points of his work is not arbitrary and points to the application of the *Potenzenlehre* on two different levels – although it is fair to say that Schelling did not pay constant attention to the uniformity of his quasi-mathematical formulas. The potencies are called, according to the *Allgemeine Deduktion des Dynamischen Prozesses*, “die einzigen Primitiva der Natur”²⁰⁹ – the only simples of nature, and they are active in the inorganic sphere, as well as in the organic:

Da selbst die organische Natur nichts anderes als die in der höheren Potenz sich wiederholende unorganische ist, so sind uns zugleich mit den Kategorien der Konstruktion der Materie überhaupt auch die für die Konstruktion des organischen Produkts gegeben. Die gegenwärtig anzustellende Untersuchung ist also zugleich die allgemeinste der gesamten Naturwissenschaft.²¹⁰

As the only simples of nature, and as constitutive of dynamic being, they are themselves dynamic units, active in all processes of becoming, and becoming, for Schelling, proceeds through the recapitulation of potencies at different levels. The potencies are therefore the units of Schelling's *Weltsystem*, a system of becoming encompassing the entire world; he seeks to construct an ontology founded on them. To confirm this proposition, we turn to Schelling's text *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen* – according to it, a *Weltsystem* must fulfill three conditions:

Soll das zu findende ein Weltsystem seyn, so muß es 1) als Weltsystem ein Princip haben, das sich selbst trägt, das in sich und durch sich selbst besteht, das sich selbst in jedem Theil des Ganzen reproducirt; 2) darf es nichts ausschließen (z. B. die Natur), nichts einseitig unterordnen oder gar unterdrücken; 3) muß es eine Methode der Entwicklung und des Fortschreitens haben, bei der man versichert seyn kann, daß kein wesentliches Mittelglied übersprungen werden kann.²¹¹

First, it is to have a principle that consists in itself and through itself. Second, it is not to exclude anything from its scope. Third, it is to have a method of progress, of which it can be certain that it does not omit any stage of member of that progress. The system of the potencies

209 SW IV 4.

210 Ibid. English: “As the organic nature itself is nothing other than the inorganic, repeating itself in the highest potency, so we are given, together with the categories of construction of matter, also the categories for the construction of the organic product. The present investigation is thus also the most general investigation of the entire natural science.”

211 SW VII 421. For English, see Schelling, F. W. J., *Stuttgart Seminars*. Tr. Thomas Pfau. In: *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory*. New York: 1994, p. 198 [cited henceforth as *Stuttgart Seminars*]: “If the system that we wish to uncover shall indeed be the system of the cosmos, (1) it must intrinsically rest on a principle that supports itself, a principle that consists in and through itself and that is reproduced in each part of the whole; (2) it must not exclude anything (e.g., nature), not must it unilaterally subordinate or suppress anything; (3) furthermore it requires a method of development and progression to ensure that no essential link has been omitted.”

fulfills these three conditions, fitting Schelling's excellent definition for systematic ontology perfectly well. To examine these conditions more closely: first, Schelling's late, mature *Potenzenlehre* we are examining here is based on the principle of generative identity (as it is presented in the *Freiheitsschrift* and which he never abandoned),²¹² just like the sketch of the potency system provided in the *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*. I have already discussed the Schellingian principle of identity briefly while addressing the works of Iain Grant in the introduction, and it is as follows: it is an identity of antecedent and consequent, i.e., a productive identity generative of difference.²¹³ This is precisely because it is not sameness and because in the relation $A=A$ the first A can never be simply the same as the second. I will return to this point in more detail in chapter V. Second, the above-cited passage from the *Allgemeine Deduktion* together with the entire presupposition of the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* demonstrate that the potencies are active in inorganic nature (the sheer structure of space, electricity, chemical reactions),²¹⁴ as well as in the organic nature, including human spirit.²¹⁵ Schelling's application of the potencies to every domain he was interested in, including mythology and religion, suggests that they are indeed all-inclusive. Third – and here lies the true significance of the *Potenzenlehre* – the potencies are functional units, and their entire mode of existence is operational, i.e. it consists of exercising the potency they stand for, and hence the “method of development and progress [Methode der Entwicklung und des Fortschreitens]” which Schelling needs in a *Weltsystem* is inscribed into the *Potenzenlehre* which, as long as it follows the development of the potencies closely, will not miss a step or stage in the process of becoming and be truly all-encompassing not only of being (which already seemed to be guaranteed by the second condition), but also of becoming. Because of this all-encompassing nature of the *Potenzenlehre*, it is beyond any doubt that it can (and should) be used to analyse predication. Schelling has used the three potencies already

212 Ibid. Schelling presents his account of identity in the *Freiheitsschrift* as something so fundamental and obvious as to not simply be rejected, and it becomes his account of predication, his very account of the verb “is” of “ x is y ”. On this point, I defer to Markus Gabriel's account of the significance of identity in Schelling's late philosophy in Gabriel, M.: “Aarhus Lectures, Second Lecture: Schelling's Ontology in the *Freedom Essay*”. In *SATS – North European Journal of Philosophy*, 2014, vol. 15(1), pp. 75-98, [Cited henceforth as *Aarhus II*], pp. 87-88.

213 Schelling's *Freiheitsschrift* and the *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen* argue for this. The former will be addressed in Chapter V; the move from identity to difference as presented in the latter I quote here: “Setzen wir $A=A$ als den Zustand des in sich verschlungenen Seyns, so haben wir in diesem $A=A$ schon dreierlei zu bemerken, a) A als Object, b) A als Subjekt, c) die Identität beider; aber dieß alles reel-ununterscheidbar. Nun soll Differenz der Principien gesetzt werden: also da A als Subjekt und A als Object unterscheidbar sind, so verwandelt sich $A=A$ in $A=B$; da aber gleichwohl die Einheit des Wesens besteht, so ist statt $A/A=A$ der Ausdruck der Differenz $A/A=B$, d. h. Eins und Zwei [...] – SW VII 425. For English see *Stuttgart Seminars*, pp. 200-201.

214 See for instance long discussion of space in *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* SW X 314-365, the *Allgemeine Deduktion des Dynamischen Prozesses* SW IV 8-14 for a presentation of the emergence of spatial dimensions, SW IV 15-25 for a presentation of electrical phenomena and SW IV 44-62 for chemical phenomena.

215 See SW X, 382-387 for a potency-related discussion of spirit.

to express the relation between subject²¹⁶ and object (dubbing the potencies respectively subject, object and subject-object).²¹⁷ These three elements are still bound together through the principle of identity. It is also the case with predication: in “x is y” the subject and object are bound through the identity “is”, which nevertheless produces something new – namely, the instance of predication, the sentence.²¹⁸ In order to see what exact bearing the *Potenzenlehre* has on predication, I will, in the following pages, discuss the third aforementioned condition of the *Weltsystem*, i.e. its method of, so to speak, unfolding. To that end, I will examine the texts of Schelling’s *Potenzenlehre* as closely and in as much detail as possible, in order to consider each potency first as a separate unit (insofar as that is at all feasible), and second, alongside the other potencies. However, this investigation does not start in a void. As a starting point, I will present the predication schemata which Wolfram Högbe developed in his *Prädikation und Genesis*, in order to use his analysis of the potencies as a guiding thread. In *Prädikation und Genesis* Högbe uses the notation A, A² und A³ for the three potencies. These are referred to by Högbe as “predicative elementary particles [predicativen Elementarteilchen]”, since he only applies them to predication, and they are “das pronominale Sein” (pronominal being), “das prädikative Sein” (predicative being) and “das propositionale Sein” (propositional being).²¹⁹ The pronominal is “colourless”, merely something (=X), an “originary negation” [“ursprüngliche Verneinung”] insofar as it is the lack of affirming any predicate whatsoever,²²⁰ that which Schelling calls “das bloße reine Subjekt des Seyns [the

216 In the *Potenzenlehre* in general, “subject” does not necessarily mean “the thinking subject”, but the human thinking subject is definitely no substance for Schelling, but potency. Compare this passage in *EvA*, p. 325: “Man sieht aber deutlich: nur wenn das Ich als eine Potenz im oben skizzierten Sinne, nicht aber, wenn es durchgehend substantielles Ich ist, möchte die Erwartung, bei dieser Operation könne etwas zurückbleiben, sich irgendwie rechtfertigen lassen.” English: “But it is clear: only when the I is a potency in the sense defined above and not if it is a thoroughly substantial I, can anything remain or somehow be justified after this operation.”

217 See for example SW XIII 315: “Der Geist, wenn er sich in sich selbst reflektiert, ist Erkennendes (id, quod intelligit), Erkanntes (id, quod intelligitur), und das, was als Erkennendes zugleich Erkanntes und als Erkanntes Erkennendes ist. Oder kürzer ausgedrückt: der selbstbewußte Geist ist Subjekt, Objekt und Subjekt-Objekt, und in dem doch nur Einer.” English: “The spirit, when it reflects itself in itself, is the knowing (id, quod intelligit), the known (id, quod intelligitur) and that which as the knowing is simultaneously the known and the knowing-as-known. Or, to put it more concisely: the self-conscious spirit is subject, object and subject-object, and with that still One.”

218 Klaus Hemmerle also links the *Potenzenlehre* with predication, where the first sentence-potency is “Das, was ist, kann alles sein” [“That which is can be everything”], and the second is “Alles ist, was es ist” [“Everything is what it is”]. – *Verständnis der Potenzenlehre*, p. 110.

219 To get a general idea of how Schelling’s *Potenzenlehre* is translated into those three terms by Högbe, see the following quote: “Schelling drückt das so aus: ‚Ist die Einheit [sprich: das propositionale Sein] das Seyende, so kann der Gegensatz, d.i. jedes der Entgegengesetzten [sprich: pronominales und prädikatives Sein], nur das nicht Seyende seyn, und hinwiederum ist eines der Entgegengesetzten und damit der Gegensatz [sprich: von pronominalem und prädikativem Sein] seyend, so kann die Einheit [sprich: das propositionale Sein] nur in das nicht Seyende zurücktreten.“ – *PG*, p. 88. English: “Schelling expresses this as follows: ‘If the unity [i.e. propositional being] is that which has being, then the opposite, that is, each of the opposed elements [i.e. pronominal and predicative being] could only be that which does not have being, and, in turn, if one of the opposed elements, thereby the opposite [of the pronominal and the predicative being] has being, then the unity [i.e. the prepositional being] can only recede to that which does not have being.’”

220 *Ibid.*, p. 84.

sheer pure subject of being]”.²²¹ It is predicate-less, so it cannot exist for itself, but only in connection with the other potencies, and even then only as the *capacity* to be something, something predicatively determined: “Irgendetwas existiert rein so, daß es etwas prädikativ Bestimmtes sein kann.”²²² Predicative being is, complementarily, the capacity to determine something, and the “ursprüngliche Bejahung [originary affirmation]”.²²³ It also does not have self-standing existence:

Um die prädikative Beraubung von irgendetwas, das *prädikatlose Sein*, kenntlich zu machen, verwendet Schelling das Symbol -A; um die ‚aussaglich‘, d. h. prädikativ bestimmte, aber *subjektlose* Art zu sein zu veranschaulichen, das Symbol +A. Es ist klar, daß beides für sich nicht sein kann, ohne darum schon überhaupt nicht zu sein.²²⁴

The propositional being is hence “ein Drittes, in dem pronominales und prädikatives Sein verschmelzen können [a third, in which the pronominal and predicative being can merge]”.²²⁵

In order to explain, what kind of third it can be, I quote Hograebe further:

Was Schelling hier postuliert, macht nur Sinn, wenn wir das Dritte als jenes ontische Medium fassen, in dem Irgendetwas ein So-und-so sein *kann*, d. h. als die Möglichkeit, daß irgendetwas und die prädikative Bestimmung zusammen stehen können.²²⁶

The third is a “Medium” – and yet, it is not merely the medium in the sense of a mediating material standing between pronominal and predicative being, but rather a middle ground, something which stands and operates in the middle between -A and +A.²²⁷ The medium is that which lets the other two elements function as it stands between them, and this is why Schelling claims that he needs the law of excluded middle²²⁸ to postulate the third potency, $\pm A$. The third can nevertheless also not be for itself, but rather only in community with the other two:²²⁹ the three potencies function only as a triad. I quote Hograebe further on this:

221 Ibid., p. 71.

222 Ibid., p. 72. English: “Something exists just so that it could be predicatively determined.”

223 Ibid., p. 84.

224 Ibid., p. 72. English: “In order to make the predicative privation of something, the *predicate-less Being*, knowable, Schelling uses the symbol -A, and in order to point to the “expressive”, i.e., predicatively determined, but *subjectless* way of being – the symbol +A. It is clear that both cannot be for themselves, without already not being at all.”

225 Ibid., p. 73.

226 Ibid., p. 73. English: “What Schelling postulates here only makes sense if we construe the third as that ontic medium in which something *can* be thus-and-so, i.e., as the possibility that something and a predicative determination could stand together.”

227 Malte Krüger has his own take on this, which is unfortunately not extensively elaborated in his book *Göttliche Freiheit*, and thus remains unclear. For him, the three potencies are as follows: -A and +A are two alternatives, excluding each other reciprocally, and $\pm A$ is the “ausgeschlossene Dritte” - the excluded middle. Thus, Krüger reads the *Potenzenlehre* as a certain formulation of the principle of the excluded middle. While interesting, this possibility is not elaborated in his book, and this portrayal remains a suggestive and somewhat unclear sketch. See *Göttliche Freiheit*, pp. 125-126.

228 SW XI 303.

229 SW XI 291.

Alle drei Momente sind so Voraussetzung dafür, daß die Φ_x -Struktur etabliert wird. Diese Struktur ist Platzhalter für alles das, was der Fall sein kann, der Spielraum für das Bestehen von Sachverhalten ist nach Schelling ‘das Seyende im Entwurf, die bloße Figur oder Idee des Seyenden, nicht es selbst’.²³⁰

Hogrebe here calls the three elements “moments”, which is consistent with my reading of potencies as dynamic. It is important to note here, that the fact that these three moments exist is not itself deducible from the three moments, but rather: *if something exists as an operation of predication, it exists through those three moments*. $\pm A$ is then what Hogrebe calls “Möglichkeitsspielraum”, the “space of possibility” in which predication unfolds. Taken abstractly, it is the empty form of predication “x is y”, the purely formal structure. This structure repeats itself as three moments of a predicative potency cycle, for the triad operates in cycles in general.²³¹ The potencies repeat themselves, according to Hogrebe, because of their relative inexistence with respect to each other; they strive to all attain being, but fail to do so necessarily because of how they are structured with respect to one another:

[Die Potenzen] streben, alle an einer und derselben Stelle, nämlich an der Stelle des Seyenden, also gleichsam in Einem Punkte zu seyn; es wird eine gegenseitige Inexistenz gefordert, da sie doch unverträglich sind, und wenn eines das Seyende ist, dann nothwendig die anderen nicht seyend seyn müssen. Diese Nothwendigkeit kann daher nur aufhören, wenn alle gleicherweise Verzicht thun das Seyende zu seyn.²³²

In this passage, however, we also encounter the “Verzicht”, the “relinquishment”, or that which is in itself devoid of potency [“das an sich Potenzlose”].²³³ According to Hogrebe, it is “was allen Anfangspotentialen Platz macht, Raum gibt. Also etwas, das Statthalter aller Anfangsbeispiele ist, nicht selbst ein Beispiel, sondern *das, wofür diese Beispiele Beispiele sind*.”²³⁴ It is, so to speak, the pure abstract form of predication, that which examples of predication are examples of. This “relinquishment” is thus this function of the propositional

230 PG, pp. 73-74. “All three moments form the precondition for establishing the Φ_x -structure. This structure is a placeholder for everything that can be the case, the space for facts being the case and is according to Schelling ‘the being in outline, the sheer figure or idea of a being, not it itself’.”

231 Ibid., p. 94: “[D]ie Fortsetzung muß als Wiederholung stattfinden.” – English: “The progression must proceed as repetition”.

232 SW VIII, 232. For English, see Schelling, F.W.J. *Ages of the World*, tr. Jason Wirth. New York: 2000, p. 22, henceforth cited as *Ages of the World*: “[the potencies] must all strive to be in one and the same locus, namely, in the locus of that which has being and hence, so to speak, to be in a single point. A reciprocal inexistence [Inexistenz] is demanded because they are incompatible and when one has being, then the others must be without being. Hence, this necessity can only terminate if all of the potencies have sacrificed, in the same fashion, being that which has being.”

233 SW VIII, 234.

234 P&G, p. 102; “[sie gibt] allen Prädikationen Raum, macht sie ausdrücklich und weist ihren Elementen eine Struktur an: die Stellung des Pronomens, die Stellung des Prädikats sind als diese Elemente festgelegt, um propositionsfähig zu sein.” English translation of the quote in the text: it is “what gives all beginning potential place, space. Thus, it is the placeholder of all initial examples, not itself an example, but *that of which those examples are examples*.” Quote in the footnote is as follows: “[it gives] space to all the predicates, makes them explicit and allocates to them a structure: a position of the pronoun and a position of the predicate are determined as these elements in order to be capable of forming a proposition”.

being, which allows it to be a backdrop against which the other potencies can assume their roles in the process of predication. It is as if the third, propositional element sets up the entire structure into which the pronominal and the predicative being fit, allowing them to take their roles. Hoguebe puts it as follows:

Da nun das propositionale Sein an sich schon das Strukturpotential für pronominales und prädikatives Sein bereitstellt, ist es das, was dem Sinn der Anfangsvariablen von Haus aus am ähnlichsten ist, denn die Variable Φx macht für *daß* Fx oder *daß* p Raum, läßt sie aussprechlich sein oder ist das Aussprechende für *daß* p .²³⁵

Hoguebe calls this background function of the propositional being the “pre-proposition” or the “propositional dimension”.²³⁶

In the *Weltalter*, the three potencies are treated as constituting the following formula, the *Weltformel*:

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

In this formula, B is originary negation, and A the originary affirmation. The consequence of the affirmation and its relation of identity to the negation comprise, however, the entire left side of the formula: A stands in an identity relation to B (a relation of “x is y”, so “A is B” – a predication relation); this identity is called A^2 (the sentence “x is y” taken as a fact), and the fact, that there is both this identity and its state of being a fact is A^3 .²³⁷

This is how the *Potenzenlehre* and its constituents are to be analysed according to Hoguebe. As was already argued in the introduction, Hoguebe’s analysis is sharp, useful, and it will be used as a background for a lot of my readings of the *Potenzenlehre* texts. However, it also focuses on the *Weltalter* only, and ignores the ontological dimension of the *Potenzenlehre*, which is after all logico-ontological. In this current chapter, therefore, I will develop an account of the potencies as presented in the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*. The most important difference between my analysis of the potencies and that of Hoguebe is the fact that the potencies here are presented as functions, and examined, among other things, as to their emergence. Hoguebe’s analysis, for all its virtues, presents merely a formal structure of the potencies, defective in exactly the sense in which discrete ontologies, criticised by Hoguebe himself in

235 Ibid., p. 102. English: “As now propositional being in itself provides the structural potential for pronominal and predicative being, it is that which is inherently closest to the sense of the initial variable, for the variable Φx makes room for ‘that [dass] Fx ’ or ‘that p ’, letting them be expressible, or being the expressing for ‘that p .’”

236 Ibid. He also identifies this dimension with what Schelling calls spirit: it is “it is “nicht selber Proposition, sondern Präproposition, absolute Proposition, Propositionsvariable oder Propositionsdimension, die Schelling auch Geist nennt.” English: it is “not itself proposition, but preproposition, absolute proposition, propositional variable or propositional dimension which Schelling also calls spirit”.

237 Ibid., p. 112.

his very book, are defective. A discrete ontology is negative; it is not grounded in actuality and uses no concept of object or entity that can be differentiated from the concept of number.²³⁸ Schelling has constructed no such ontology, and although Högrefe's schema has little to do with numbers in a literal sense, it is nevertheless quite negative. We have, in *Prädikation und Genesis*, a formal sketch, which presents the three potencies as elements of a structure, without examining the generation of this structure. Despite Högrefe's insistence that a complication between the world and the faculties of cognition is necessary for successful predication, *Prädikation und Genesis* considers the structure of predication as if it were completely detached from the world. Throughout Högrefe's book, it is at no point specified which relationship holds between the world and the cognitive structures of predication. We are given merely the subdivided structure of an already formulated instance of predication; we do not see emergence addressed in the text. This is, I believe, a fully deliberate move – in the 12th section of his book, Högrefe writes that speculative cosmology is to be independent of results of empirical investigation (including, one would think, philosophy of nature). This is because he takes metaphysical speculation to be the “fundamental heuristic” grounding discovery: it is “nichts anderes als Fundamentalheuristik ist, die jedem context of discovery zugrunde liegt und insofern jedem Prozeß der Theorienbildung eine formale Erbschaft hinterläßt.”²³⁹ Speculative cosmology is exactly what allows us to interpret the world at all, and to constitute it as at all empirically given, hence it cannot be based on any empirical interpretation of the world. I quote Högrefe further:

Die Frage ist nur: gibt es tatsächlich ein methodisches Verfahren, das die Unabhängigkeit der spekulativen Kosmologie von der empirischen garantiert? Auf diese Frage sind wir inzwischen gut vorbereitet: ja, dieses methodische Verfahren gibt es, nämlich als Erweiterung der Theorie der Prädikation ‚nach unten‘ als Exhaustion der formalen kosmologischen Option jeder Prädikation [...] Die gesamte Spekulation, die Schelling als formale Kosmologie, ja Theogonie bemüht, ist einzig und allein als methodischer Ausbau der Theorie der Prädikation verständlich zu machen, wenn anders wir hier nicht tatsächlich in die Sümpfe geraten wollen.²⁴⁰

Consider the implications of the quoted passage: *Prädikation und Genesis* produces a theory of predication, but it does not demonstrate how the predicative operations have emerged from

238 See *ibid.*, p. 46: such an ontology uses concepts that are no different from numbers: “keinen Begriff von Dingen, Gegenständen, Objekten, Entitäten, die von Zahlen verschieden wären”.

239 *Ibid.*, pp. 68–69. English: metaphysical speculation is “nothing other than fundamental heuristic, which underlies each context of discovery and therefore leaves a formal legacy to every process of theory-building”.

240 *Ibid.*, p. 69. English: “The question is only: is there indeed a methodical procedure that guarantees the independence of speculative cosmology from the empirical? We have been prepared well for this question: yes, there is such a methodical procedure, namely, the extension of the theory of predication ‘downwards’ as the exhaustion of the formal cosmological option of each predication [...] The entire speculation which Schelling endeavours to make a formal cosmology, even theogony, is singularly and only to be understood as a methodical development of a theory of predication, if we do not indeed want to get stuck.”

the world, considering predication to be instead a sheer transcendental operation without natural grounds (which then grounds speculative cosmology). I completely agree that speculative cosmology (which is carried out through predication) is a necessary heuristic against the backdrop of which a theory of predication is to arise at all. I also agree that a Schellingian cosmology, whether speculative or not, is grounded in the theory of predication we adopt: the world seen through a Schellingian lens is a world where nature grounds thinking, which then proceeds to model this grounding nature through the laws of thinking governing its operations, such that the modelled nature is obviously different than the nature which produced the thinking. However, the grounding nature is still implicated in every act of thinking and predication, insofar as it is what produced thought, and ignoring this implication would be to posit a break between thought and being. Hoguebe, however, makes precisely this step when he portrays the *Potenzenlehre* as abstractly as he does, and this step is also precisely what I would like to avoid. I take it to be unquestionable that the potencies, according to Schelling himself, are simultaneously logical and ontological.²⁴¹ Schelling writes, in the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* that although the potencies are reminiscent of well-known logical principles (“an bekannte logische Grundsätze erinnern”), the potency dialectic belongs to the sphere described by Schelling thus: “wo die Gesetze des Denkens Gesetze des Seyns sind, und nicht, wie nach Kant so allgemein geglaubt worden, die bloße Form, sondern den Inhalt der Erkenntniß bestimmen [...]”.²⁴² Within the framework of the *Potenzenlehre*, we see from this last quote, laws of thinking are laws of being. It is important that Schelling here elaborates further:

Das Denken, sagten wir, hat einen Inhalt für sich. Dieser Inhalt, den die Vernunft allein von sich selbst und von nichts anderem hat, ist im Allgemeinen *das Seyende* und können im Besonderen nur jene *Momente* seyn, deren jedes für sich nur das Seyende *seyn kann* (nämlich wenn die andern hinzukommen), also nur eine Möglichkeit oder Potenz des Seyenden ist. *Diese* Möglichkeiten aber, die nicht bloß wie andere gedacht, sondern wie das Seyende gar nicht *nicht* gedacht werden können (denn das Seyende hinweggenommen, ist auch alles Denken hinweggenommen), diese Möglichkeiten also, welche die nicht bloß zu

241 Compare for example *Philosophische Religion*, p. 217f and *Spekulation und Faktizität*, p. 216 for two convincing accounts of potencies as simultaneously onto- and epistemological. Franz is particularly interesting and detailed here: “Die Potenzen sind jene im reinen Denken gefundenen Elemente des Seienden, die in der ersten Wissenschaft als deren Konstitutionsprinzipien, als immanente Ursachen des Prozesses der Wirklichkeit entfaltet werden. Die Potenzen sind also das Ganze des endlichen Seienden selbst, sowohl als Idee des reinen Denkens, als auch als Prozeß der Realität, insofern dieser Gegenstand der ersten Wissenschaft ist.” English: “The potencies are those elements of that which has being, which can be found in the pure thought and unfold in the first science as principles of its constitution, as immanent causes of the processes of actuality. The potencies are thus the whole of finite beings [Seiende – usually translated, in literature and by me as ‘that which has being’ – D.K.], both as idea of pure thinking and as process of reality, insofar as its object is the first science.”

242 SW XI, 303. English: “[...] where the laws of thinking are laws of being and it is not the case, as it is so generally believed after Kant, that they determine mere form of knowledge, but they also determine its content”.

denkenden, sondern die gar nicht nicht zu denkenden, also nothwendig gedachte sind, und daher auf ihre Weise und im Reich der Vernunft ebenso *sind*, wie die Wirklichkeiten der Erfahrung auf *ihre* Weise und in *ihrem* Reiche sind: diese Möglichkeiten sind die ersten und von denen alle andern abgeleitet sind, die also, welche uns möglicherweise zu Principen alles Seyns werden.²⁴³

Here Schelling tells us that the content of thinking is being; and hence laws of thinking reflect the laws of its content. This is related to what Schelling has addressed in his *Begründung der positiven Philosophie* lectures: since the immediate content of reason is the infinite potency of being, the laws of thinking reflect the possible structure of being – this is further evidence for the ontoepistemological status of the potencies and of Schelling’s enterprise.

Furthermore, returning to Högrefe – *Prädikation und Genesis* restricts itself to only one Schelling text – the *Weltalter*. The *Weltalter* is an incomplete text, which Schelling had never published. Although it is highly important for Schelling scholarship, it is not the best source to reconstruct Schelling’s *Potenzenlehre* – it had developed in more nuance after the *Weltalter* texts were written. So, for instance, although potencies in the latest iterations of the *Potenzenlehre* are the moments of a process,²⁴⁴ it is not at all clear that this is the case in the *Weltalter*. In the third draft of the *Weltalter*, Schelling writes extensively about the first potency A (the past), as if it were a part of the process of becoming, only to claim at the end that he had been discussing “the eternal past [ewige Vergangenheit]”²⁴⁵ all along – that, which was never present, was always in the background and never played a role in the process of becoming. It seems as if the *Weltalter* are a text on divine essence, unconditioned, fixed and eternal. It is a text about how the world has been ordered – in the sense of *Weltgesetz*, law of the world – and not about how the world functions. In the works after the *Weltalter* (especially in *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*), Schelling has treated the *Potenzenlehre* explicitly as processual, conceptually expanding on his presentation accordingly – for instance, in the later

243 SW XI, 304. English: “Thought, we said, has content for itself. This content, which reason alone has of itself and of nothing else, is in general *that which has being* and could in particular be only these *Moments*, of which each for itself *can be* merely that which has being (namely, when the other moments accrue); thus it is only a possibility or potency of that which has being. *These* possibilities, however, are not thought simply as others, but rather are not thinkable otherwise than that which has being (for to take away that which has being is to also take away all thought). These possibilities thus are not only to be thought, but rather not to be not thought, thus are necessarily thought and hence in their own way and in the realm of reason similarly *are*, just as the actualities of experience are in *their* way and in *their* realm: these possibilities are the first and from them all others are derived, also those which possibly become principles of all being.

244 SW XI, 303 footnote 2 - “[D]enn zum ganzen und vollkommen Seyenden gehört ebensowohl das nur gegenständlich subjektlos seyende, also (wie wir es ebenfalls ausdrücken können) was außer sich das seyende ist; nur nicht in Einem Athem, daß wir so sagen, können wir das Seyende als jenes und als dieses, wir können es als jenes nur zuerst, als dieses hernach setzen, so daß wir nun beide auch als Momente des Seyenden bestimmen können.” English: “[F]or the objective subjectless that-which-has-being [seyende], thus (as we can also express it) what is being outside itself, belongs to the full and complete being just as well. We cannot posit that which has being as this and as that in the same breath, so to speak, but as this only at first and as that – subsequently, so that we now can determine both also as moments of that which has being.”

245 SW VIII, 254.

texts he uses two notations to express the operations of the potencies. The first one is the same notation used in the *Weltalter* (A, A^2, A^3), and the second, which he uses predominantly, is the triad $-A, +A$ and $\pm A$. Hoguebe seems to use both notations interchangeably. Yet, pronominal being is, for Hoguebe, the potency denoted as B , while the predicative being is the potency denoted as A and the propositional being – that denoted as A^2 . Hoguebe maps them respectively to the above triads, and I will discuss the potencies B (as one side of $-A$) and A^2 in what follows. The reason for Hoguebe’s notational choices is unclear, and while I can say nothing of Hoguebe’s choices in notation interpretation, as they are not at all explicitly discussed by him, I will attempt to develop a plausible reason for the dual notation in Schelling’s work itself through the functional approach I follow.

My approach is partly inspired by Thomas Buchheim’s *Eins von Allem*, which portrays the *Potenzenlehre* as a dimensionalisation of the actual: “Orientierungsleistung, [...] *Dimensionalisierung des Enthaltenseins von Wirklichem in einer Welt*”.²⁴⁶ Furthermore, Buchheim explains the potencies, much as I do, as placeholders, calling them in *Eins von Allem* “Stellen [,] wie Ordinaten auf einem Nullpunkt”²⁴⁷, and describing them in his article “Die Idee des Existierenden und der Raum” as follows:

,Potenz‘ ist in diesem Zusammenhang nicht als Kraft oder Vermögen zu verstehen, sondern markiert einen logischen Exponenten, modern gesprochen eine Leerstelle, in der Existierendes einen Wert oder Geltung besitzen muss, wenn und indem es ist und als Seiendes logisch erfasst wird.²⁴⁸

The potencies form a pure formal structure, which is then realisable in multiple domains – hence this kind of philosophy has been designated by Schelling as “reirational” – purely rational.²⁴⁹ This approach allows us to treat even predication as a process, and not as the

246 *EvA*, p. 51. English: “An effort of orientation [...] a dimensionalisation of the containedness of actuality in a world.” Buchheim’s article “Von der passiven Bewegtheit des Subjekts beim späten Schelling” contains more pointers showing that he takes the potencies to be a kind of functional structure. For instance, he writes, concerning the potency of the subject: “Subjekt ist also nichts an sich. [...] Subjekt ist nur ein Formbestandteil an allem Sein. Verliert es seine Formstelle, verliert es auch seinen Subjektscharakter“. – Buchheim, T.: “Von der passiven Bewegtheit des Subjekts beim späten Schelling“. In Baumgartner, H.M., Jacobs, W.G. (Ed.): *Philosophie der Subjektivität? Zur Bestimmung des neuzeitlichen Philosophierens*, Band 2, Stuttgart/Band-Cannstatt: 1993, pp. 382-390, here pp. 387 [cited henceforth as *Passive Bewegtheit*]. English here: “Subject is thus nothing in-itself. [...] Subject is merely a component of the form in all being. If it loses its formative place, it also loses its subject character.”

247 *EvA*, p. 51: “Yet in the latest writings [Schelling] designates the potencies as ‘places’ [...] like ordinates on an origin, through which all that eventuates is taken up in an orientation form.”

248 Buchheim, T.: “Die Idee des Existierenden und der Raum.” In *Kant-Studien*, 106/1 (2015) p.36–66, here p. 46. English: “‘Potency’ in relation to this, is not to be understood as force or power, but it rather marks a logical exponent, to speak in modern terms, an argument place, in which an existent must possess a value if and insofar as it is and is logically grasped.”

249 Compare Breidbach, O.: “Über die Voraussetzungen eines Reduktionismus. Zur Aktualität des Schellingschen Naturbegriffs.“ In Baumgartner, H.M., Jacobs, W.G. (Ed.): *Philosophie der Subjektivität? Zur Bestimmung des neuzeitlichen Philosophierens*, Band 2, Stuttgart/Band-Cannstatt: 1993, p. 373-381, here p. 377-378. Concerning nature as a structure, realisable in multiple domains, Breidbach writes that the examples of natural processes Schellings give serve as metaphors: they recapitulate the structure of nature, i.e. they are all the potency series $-A +A \pm A$, only differently expressed.

application of some immovable transcendental structures formed in some sort of an inaccessible world-in-itself. However, before I continue, it is crucial to highlight some points of disagreement between this text and Buchheim's view of the potencies. First of all, just like Wolfram Hogrebe earlier, Buchheim does not pay enough attention to the notations Schelling uses. Although *Eins von Allem* focuses on the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*, which uses the positive/negative notation, the book itself uses the exponential notation lifted from *Identitätsphilosophie* throughout. Worse yet, the influence of *Identitätsphilosophie* in *Eins von Allem* is not merely notational: Buchheim carries over insights from *Identitätsphilosophie* into his analysis of the late *Darstellung*. This, it may be thought, is perfectly consonant with the approach advocated in the introduction to this work: there is only one Schelling, and the radical character of breaks between Schelling's works and "periods" of Schelling's thought is usually vastly overestimated. And yet, if there was a major shift in Schelling's thought, it is that from the static constructions of the *Identitätsphilosophie* towards the more process-oriented thought of the *Freiheitsschrift* and what followed it. This shift will be discussed in detail in chapter VII; for now, it must be remarked that Buchheim often lifts insights from *Identitätsphilosophie* without much discussion. For instance, while discussing the formalism of the potencies, *Eins von Allem* offers a reading of the potencies A and B (it is also not very clear why the formalism section of *Eins von Allem* discusses the potency "A" if *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* focuses on -A and +A) as identity (A) and form of identification [Identifikationsform] (B), which are then set in identity to one another (A=B). This is a perfectly valid reading of the formalism from the *Identitätsphilosophie*, and yet, surrounded by sections discussing the *Darstellung der Reirationalen Philosophie* and *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, it is not at all clear in what way Buchheim intends the conclusions of the *Identitätsphilosophie* to apply to Schelling's later philosophy (although it is clear that he indeed does intend them to apply somehow). A further disagreement, one hinted at most heavily at in the introduction is perhaps related to this legacy of *Identitätsphilosophie* in *Eins von Allem* in that according to Buchheim, the potencies are not active.²⁵⁰ I am here not unsympathetic to the spirit of Buchheim's argument, and I fully understand and accept its intention: Buchheim rails against the notion that the potencies are self-fulfilling possibilities that unfold out of themselves and actualise themselves. This is indeed a reading one should caution against insofar as potencies can be read and indeed have been read as "willing" something or "striving" towards something – Buchheim himself gives examples of such thinking in his book²⁵¹ and points out that the conception of potency as striving towards something comes from a misreading of Aristotle – it is not as if potency in Aristotle strives

250 See for instance EvA, p. 44.

251 See EvA pp. 41-42.

towards something; it is rather actuality which acts, and potency is fully passive. Buchheim concludes: it is actuality that acquires possibility, and it is fully impossible for potency to be active for itself and by itself. The reading of potency in Schelling (specifically the *potentia activa* in the *Philosophie der Offenbarung*) as a self-actualising possibility is thus false and potencies actually transition *a potentia ad actum* without at all being active.²⁵² So far, so good. And yet, isn't it the case that the way Buchheim presents his cautioning lands him in a reading of the potencies that denies their dynamic character? The answer to this is equivocal: denying the dynamic character of the potencies is actually partly justified, for if we consider the abstract potency structure, the formalism $-A/+A/\pm A$, they are indeed not dynamic themselves, but rather form the structure of something dynamic. The functions cut out by the *Potenzenlehre*, which are to be fulfilled by objects and/or processes in the world, are indeed not self-fulfilling, actualising or even dynamic – although even this might be too categorical, as, we will see, there are certain relationships between the abstract potency units which have them interrelate and become one another. Be that as it may: from this we cannot conclude that the potencies in the world – the “functors” fulfilling the functions set by the structure of the *Potenzenlehre* – are also static. In *Eins von Allem*, Buchheim does not clarify this equivocation, and it remains unclear what it is he thinks is inactive – despite himself claiming that the potencies are placeholders, he does little by way of articulating the relationship between the placeholders and what they hold – and does not address why it is the case that, although the placeholders are inactive, the structure they express is the structure of something dynamic or how it even is (as we shall see in the course of this chapter) that the potencies as placeholders are not even clearly cut, so that, for instance, $-A$ undergoes transformations and emerges as B , and the roles of $-A$ and $+A$ invert in an operation Schelling calls the *Universio*. That Buchheim doesn't deny the dynamism of what the potencies express is itself not explicitly stated in his book, although it is highly probable – a few pages after discussing the inactive character of the potencies, he describes matter (also a potency) as the “Bewegungsform eines Materieprozesses”²⁵³ and discusses at length the processual character of Schelling's philosophy, which makes his emphasis on the inactive status of the potencies a few pages earlier somewhat puzzling and needing clarification.²⁵⁴ Finally, the last point of

252 What I summarise here is on pages 41-44 of *Eins von Allem*.

253 Ibid., p. 49. English: “the movement form of a matter-process”.

254 I am grateful to Lucas Nascimento Machado for this point: it could be the case that Buchheim, by calling matter a “Bewegungsform” intends to point out that potencies make out the form of becoming, which they, as it will turn out on my account as well, indeed do. Yet, Buchheim's discussion of potency as, among other things, real possibility, which is presented in the introduction and is at least on the face of it, not merely formal, as well as a lack of discussion of the relation between form and content, which would be imperative if he wants to make them into merely the form of becoming, make me stand my ground – Buchheim's position on the static nature of the potencies is ambiguous.

disagreement I would like to highlight is the odd (and very strong) occasional link which Buchheim makes between potencies and perspectivism: this has already been mentioned in the introduction to this text, where I discuss his examples of baked goods taken under the potency of photographic object. This goes somewhat further in his analysis of the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*: he takes Schelling's characterisation of potencies as moments of that which has being [Momente des Seienden] and then calls these moments "bloß perspektivischer Schein",²⁵⁵ as if the three potencies are three perspectival moments of or onto one entity, which then form the modal matrix of this entity's being, mapping what it can and cannot be (and thus also what it is). This is an interesting and clever reading; however, it puts in question the ontological character of the potencies which Buchheim has committed himself to at the beginning of the book, and, as the following analysis will hopefully show, I disagree completely with the claim that the potencies are perspectival aspects of something. Instead, I would like to take the idea of the potencies being functions as far as possible, and demonstrate that it works excellently within the framework of Schelling's philosophy. I will however pay attention, in what follows, to the relations between the three potencies, thus highlighting a certain "perspectival", or perhaps more precisely, relational character: the potencies only *are* together, and much of their features are only apparent when they are taken in their relation to one another.

The aforementioned disagreements between this work and that of Buchheim notwithstanding, the following analysis of the potencies owes much to Buchheim's work, and intends to remedy some of its shortcomings. This chapter, following *Eins von Allem*, will chiefly analyse the operation of the potencies as presented in the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*. Following this text, I will take the double potency $-A/B$ as the first potency, $+A$ as the second and $\pm A$ as the third. I will investigate how the triad of the potencies unfolds, among other things as an instance of predication, and thus study not only its "morphology" (how it is structured), but also its "physiology" (how the constituent parts of the triad function). One debt to Buchheim becomes here immediately clear: following *Eins von Allem*, I will read the three potencies' unfolding not as a logical sequence, but also not as a temporal one, but as a functional structure of placeholders.²⁵⁶ To reiterate the function-oriented character of my approach: the same three potencies are active in various processes, but this does not mean that there are numerically three potencies, somehow active in all processes in the world. Such an omnipresence of the very same potencies would have been indeed impossible. It is however the case that the potencies, all three of them, are functions, i.e. roles which various object and activities adopt. This is how they will be considered in what follows. The first section of this

255 Ibid., p. 127. English: "merely perspectival being".

256 On how Buchheim approaches this issue, see *EvA*, pp. 121-122.

chapter will give special attention to the double character of the first potency and its transformation from -A to B and vice versa. The second section will look at what Schelling calls “*Universio*”, a process in which the functions of subject and object in a potency operation switch places (so that, after the switch, -A plays the role of +A and vice versa). Finally, the last section of the chapter will address the role of $\pm A$ as the endpoint of becoming, but also as the new starting point. This last section will also propose a possible explanation for Schelling’s use of two notations to symbolise the potencies. All throughout, the chapter will use the structures and processes of predication to concretise the operations of the *Potenzenlehre*.

I. The First Potency

If we look at how the first potency is defined in the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*, we see that it is called “reines Seynkönnen”²⁵⁷ – pure ability, or sheer Can. It seems that it is the passive potency – it has no determination in itself, but any determination can be applied to it. It is matter in Schelling’s *Potenzenlehre*, or, so to speak, it performs the function of matter.²⁵⁸ In order to approach the subject of matter in Schelling’s late philosophy, it would be helpful to take a detour through Plato’s *Timaeus*. However, we must first confront a preemptive objection here: in *Philosophie und Religion* Schelling takes the *Timaeus* to be no “true” Platonic work, going so far as to suggest that it is a profanation of Plato’s true teachings (“[der *Timaios*] die wahre Lehre von Platon entweiht”²⁵⁹), and this is by no means an incorrect reading of what Schelling defends in *Philosophie und Religion*²⁶⁰ or in the *Identitätsphilosophie* in general – in that period, Schelling considered Neoplatonism to most correctly reflect the spirit of “Plato’s true teachings”. But this raises the question: is the reference to *Timaeus* then not counterproductive, seeing as the texts discussed here have been written after *Philosophie und Religion*? The reference to *Timaeus* in this section is however made solely to shed light on an issue as difficult as the question of potency and matter in

257 SW X, 306.

258 John E. Wilson also reads the first potency as matter (see *Schellings Mythologie*, p. 28-29 and 36-37). Actually, Wilson’s reading of the potencies is not dissimilar to that presented here. As will become clear in the course of this chapter, -A/B is the subject of determination or matter, +A is the determining force and $\pm A$ is the result of the process of determination. For Wilson, -A is possibility or potency, +A is actuality, and $\pm A$ is the result of their interaction. However, the way Wilson presents this schema is puzzling, and this is why his reading is not more discussed: since +A is actual, it remains unclear how Wilson’s reading squares with Schelling’s oft-repeated statement that the three potencies only exist together, as it seems that actuality will be able to exist on its own. A defender of Wilson could reply that Wilson’s -A and +A only refer to potencies of God, and it can be argued that God’s actuality cannot exist without God’s potency. However, it is clear that Schelling does not intend to apply potencies to God only.

259 SW VI, 36.

260 For more on this and on the *Timaeus*-debate between Schelling und August Böckh in Asmuth, C.: *Interpretation – Transformation. Das Platonbild bei Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Schleiermacher und Schopenhauer und das Legitimationsproblem der Philosophiegeschichte*, Göttingen: 2006, p. 116-122 [zit. *Interpretation – Transformation*].

Schelling's late works through a somewhat simpler issue – that of matter in the *Timaeus*. The parallels drawn in this section are not at all meant to imply that Schelling approaches matter in his late works in exactly the same way in which Plato approaches it in the *Timaeus*. Furthermore, there is evidence that Schelling retracts his negative judgement of the *Timaeus* after some time.²⁶¹ However it may be, I use the *Timaeus* in this chapter primarily as a didactic instrument.²⁶²

The *Timaeus*, at [49a], having discussed what is intelligent in the cosmos, addresses necessity in its treatment of matter. This is done through adding the idea of the receptacle to the scheme of the universe Plato's "bastard reason"²⁶³ has constructed in the dialogue. The receptacle is introduced as a third element necessary for the creation of the universe, in addition to the "intelligible pattern" (i.e. the model for the universe, contained in the demiurge) and the resulting "imitation of the pattern" (the thinkable copy of the model, i.e. the Platonic Idea),²⁶⁴ as "another kind, which is difficult of explanation and dimly seen".²⁶⁵ The receptacle – matter – is something obscure and difficult, and what else could it be in a Platonic dialogue, given matter's apparently absolute opposition to the idea according to Plato? Surely matter is constant becoming, therefore unknowable, therefore dark and obscure – the source of all imperfection! Reassured thus, we turn to the Greek text. What do we see?

τρίτον δὲ τότε μὲν οὐ διειλόμεθα, νομίσαντες τὰ δύο ἕξειν ἰκανῶς· νῦν δὲ ὁ λόγος ἔοικεν εἰσαναγκάζειν χαλεπὸν καὶ ἀμυδρὸν εἶδος ἐπιχειρεῖν λόγοις ἐμφανίσει.²⁶⁶

The third we did not at the time distinguish, thinking that the two would be enough. Now however, the argument apparently necessitates a difficult and dark [Eidos], to exhibiting which in discourse we must put our hand.²⁶⁷

261 In *Interpretation – Transformation*, Christoph Asmuth writes about a debate of sorts, that arose in correspondence between Schelling and August Böckh, where Böckh then comes to the conclusion that Schelling has distanced himself from Neoplatonism since the *Freiheitsschrift* and has probably changed his mind concerning the *Timaeus*. Asmuth remarks that the *Freiheitsschrift* and *Philosophie und Religion* are closely related, so that the *Freiheitsschrift* continues what *Philosophie und Religion* began, and that hence the *Timaeus* is appraised negatively by Schelling also after 1804: "Schelling stellt bereits am Beginn der Freiheitsschrift klar, daß er die erneute Revision seiner Philosophie an die veränderte Lehre in Philosophie und Religion anschließt" [English: "Schelling makes it clear already at the beginning of the *Freedom essay* that he is relating the new revision of his philosophy to the changed doctrine in *Philosophy and Religion*"], we read in *Interpretation – Transformation*, p. 122. Due to obvious discrepancies between the two texts, e.g. on the subject of evil, which in *Philosophie und Religion* is a privation and in the *Freiheitsschrift* is a positive power, Asmuth's remark is not entirely convincing.

262 Despite this didactic restriction in this current work, the *Timaeus* remains important for the late Schelling. A discussion of this importance can be found in Seubert, H.: "Vernunft und Ananke. Zu Schellings ‚Timaios‘-Kommentar und seiner Bedeutung für Schellings Denkweg." in Hahn, E. (Ed.): *Vorträge zur Philosophie Schellings*, Berlin: 2000, p. 81-125, here pp. 108ff.

263 *Timaeus* 52b.

264 *Timaeus* 48e.

265 *Timaeus*, 49a.

266 *Timaeus*, 49a

267 Translation mine, modified to highlight Plato using the term "Eidos" to describe matter. Jowett, for instance, has "There is also a third kind which we did not distinguish at the time, conceiving that the two would

What we see is a remarkable statement: the third necessitated in the dialogue, the matter which Plato feels inclined to address, is called an *Eidos*, an Idea. A “difficult and dark” one, but an Idea nonetheless. The Greek ‘Eidos’ is not quite a technical term, so it has no univocal usage. In “everyday” ancient Greek, it has meant simply “something seen”, “something one is aware of”, “shape”, “form” and “kind”.²⁶⁸ However, it is not used to refer to notions, opinions, or individual thoughts, and it is not a formal or abstract category either.²⁶⁹ In broadest possible terms, it means rather that which is recognized when a thing is seen. It is furthermore not at all clear, that Plato takes matter to be an Idea in the classical sense, that of his doctrine of Ideas (and it is fundamentally unclear that Plato has used the word “Eidos” in this “classical” sense anywhere). “Eidos” in Plato usually refers to a kind of form, which has certain specific characteristics. “Eidos” is therefore a certain model (according to Schelling, a “face [Gesicht]”,²⁷⁰ i.e. a recognisable form) through which, or in harmony with which things become.

Moreover, the way Plato refers to this “difficult and dark” idea leaves no doubt – it is intelligible, for although our reason, in thinking about cosmogony, can only be a bastard reason, Plato is still interested in “exhibiting” this “difficult and dark” Idea, the receptacle, “in discourse”. The usual readings of Plato take matter to be something so dark, that its “exhibition in discourse” is impossible. It seems that there is more to matter in Plato than simply blind dark becoming, without being or pause. Does this mean then that the receptacle is not matter? Intelligible, an Idea, its discussion quickly followed by a discussion of material elements – the triangles of fire, water, air and earth, out of which everything is composed (and which seemingly are prime matter), it brings us to a pertinent question: what is matter for Plato?

In what follows, I will answer this question and argue that the Idea of matter in Plato illuminates greatly the conception of matter in Schelling’s late philosophy – also “difficult and dark”, which in turn would help us illuminate an even more difficult and dark subject within

be enough. But now the argument seems to require that we should set forth in words another kind, which is difficult of explanation and dimly seen.”

268 Sometimes Plato uses “Eidos” to mean “body”, and a beautiful body at that (e.g. Theaetetus 162b or Phaedrus 229d).

269 In Homer, “Eidos” usually means “shape”, a beautiful shape. In Plato it occasionally means “shape”, “form”, “kind, sort” – generally, something that is seen and recognized. The only systematic study of the use of the word “Eidos” in Platonic texts I know is in Fyodor Losev’s *Ocherki Antichnogo Simvolizma i Mifologii* (*Sketches of Ancient Symbolism and Mythology*), a Soviet study originally from 1930. See Losev, F. *Ocherki Antichnogo Simvolizma i Mifologii* (Очерки античного символизма и мифологии). Moscow: 1993.

270 See WA I 56-57 – “Das schöne Wort Idea sagt seiner Urbedeutung nach dasselbe, was das Deutsche Wort Gesicht.” English: “The beautiful word ‘idea’ has, according to its original meaning, the same meaning as the German word ‘face.’” Compare to Kahlefeld, S.: “Spielerischer Dualismus. Schellings Lösungsvorschlag zu einem zentralen Problem des Idealismus – in einem Nebengedanken der ‚Weltalter‘ von 1811.” In Iber, C. und Pocaí, R. (Ed.): *Selbstbesinnung der philosophischen Moderne. Beiträge zur kritischen Hermeneutik ihrer Grundbegriffe*, Cuxhaven/Dartford: 1998, pp. 95-118, here p. 99.

the work of that same period of Schelling's work – that of the matter of predication, the very materiality of thought. This problematic, put precisely thus – as an enquiry into the matter of predication - is relevant within transcendental post-Kantian philosophy because of Kant's claim that our judgments of appearance, instances of predication, have as their object a "transcendental object = X".²⁷¹ This transcendental object = X is that indefinable object which serves as a placeholder for empirical objects, which relates the experiences we have in appearances to objects of appearance and to the ground for appearances. The transcendental object, in fact, is a function just like the potencies, precisely because it is a placeholder. In other words, according to a simplified preliminary understanding of the transcendental object, it is to experience what raw matter is to material things produced. Since the transcendental object is important for Kant's critical system and, as will be argued, for Schelling as well, the line of investigation into matter from Platonic to Schellingian to the matter of predication will be pursued.

A. Plato

Platonic matter, as already mentioned above, can be quite confusing if one leaves behind the textbook interpretation of Plato as a strict two-world dualist. If we set aside the notion of Plato's matter as something unintelligible and perpetually changing – the source of imperfection in our world – we are left with at least two claims Plato makes about matter, both taken from the section of *Timaeus* which deals with *Ἀνάγκη*, necessity in the universe – what is determined, in contrast to the free intellect of the demiurge and the Ideas he uses to create the world. The necessity section of the *Timaeus*, Plato makes clear, deals with matter,²⁷² with "the nature of fire, and water, and air, and earth, such as they were prior to the creation of the heaven, and what was happening to them in this previous state".²⁷³ Prior to the introduction of mind into the world, there was necessity. The view of matter we get from the following discussion is thus: on one hand, matter is composed of four different kinds of particles – triangles, which are the fundamental constituents of fire, water, air and earth.

In the first place, then, as is evident to all, fire and earth and water and air are bodies. And every sort of body possesses solidity, and every solid must necessarily be contained in planes; and every plane rectilinear figure is composed of triangles [...]²⁷⁴

So it seems that bodies have a corpuscular nature, the corpuscles being these fundamental triangles, four in kind. On the other hand, we have the receptacle which Plato presents as that

271 Kant, 1998, 233

272 In his *Timaioschrift*, Schelling calls "die Form der Veränderung der Welt" – the form of transformation of the world". See *Timaioschrift*, 28.

273 *Timaeus*, 48b

274 *Timaeus*, 53c-d

which is completely formless, completely neutral in order to receive the imprint of the forms, as matter for the form, to retroactively apply Aristotelian parlance:

Wherefore, that which is to receive all forms should have no form; as in making perfumes they first contrive that the liquid substance which is to receive the scent shall be as inodorous as possible; or as those who wish to impress figures on soft substances do not allow any previous impression to remain, but begin by making the surface as even and smooth as possible.²⁷⁵

The difference, therefore, between material corpuscles and the receptacle²⁷⁶ underlying all determination is such that the corpuscles are among the things that are “imprinted” on the receptacle; they are parts of the receptacle’s material nature.²⁷⁷ Hence the constantly-changing material bodies – they are not to be given determinate names, and are merely to be referred to as things of “such a nature”²⁷⁸, the nature in question being material or “receptacular”, while the receptacle, “that in which the elements severally grow up, and appear, and decay, is alone to be called by the name “this” or “that”²⁷⁹ – matter.

So, until now we have observed that Platonic matter has a dual nature: on one hand, we have a somatic, corpuscular understanding of it, and on the other we have the receptacle – undetermined raw matter, the basis of the corpuscles, that which, according to Schelling’s *Timaioschrift*, has “no empirically determinate form [keine empirisch bestimmte Form]”.²⁸⁰ In addition to this dual nature of matter in Plato, the expression “difficult and dark idea” suggests that it is also something imperceptible and unchanging, so, not an object of sensory perception. To put it in the words of Iain Grant, from his book *Philosophies of Nature after Schelling*:

Platonic matter consists of two components: the ‘difficult and dark Idea’, and the medium or ‘receptacle of all becoming’ (Tim. 49a4–7). As Idea, it is always existing

275 *Timaeus*, 51a

276 It is not fully clear, that the receptacle is indeed matter. Schelling, however, at least holds it for the “matter of the world [Materie der Welt]” – *Timaioschrift* 51.

277 See *Timaeus*, 51b.

278 “Thus, then, as the several elements never present themselves in the same form, how can any one have the assurance to assert positively that any of them, whatever it may be, is one thing rather than another? No one can. But much the safest plan is to speak of them as follows: -Anything which we see to be continually changing, as, for example, fire, we must not call “this” or “that,” but rather say that it is “of such a nature”; nor let us speak of water as “this”; but always as “such”; nor must we imply that there is any stability in any of those things which we indicate by the use of the words “this” and “that,” supposing ourselves to signify something thereby; for they are too volatile to be detained in any such expressions as “this,” or “that,” or “relative to this,” or any other mode of speaking which represents them as permanent. We ought not to apply “this” to any of them, but rather the word “such”; which expresses the similar principle circulating in each and all of them; for example, that should be called “fire” which is of such a nature always, and so of everything that has generation. That in which the elements severally grow up, and appear, and decay, is alone to be called by the name “this” or “that”; but that which is of a certain nature, hot or white, or anything which admits of opposite equalities, and all things that are compounded of them, ought not to be so denominated.” Plato, *Timaeus*, 49d-50a.

279 *Timaeus*, 50b.

280 *Timaioschrift* 32.

and unchanging and imperceptible to the senses; as receptacle, it is generated and that in which all generation occurs, yet like the Idea, it is ‘dark’, imperceptible.²⁸¹

The bifurcation in the nature of Platonic matter lies here, although Grant articulates it in a slightly different way, as the bifurcation between the Idea of matter and the receptacle as subject to the imprinting of the various forms. Nevertheless, it is still the distinction between matter in its abstraction, as pure materiality, and matter as what underlies singular material entities as matter of those entities to which specific determinations are applied. It must be noted that the two “components” of matter are not like the separate ingredients of a dish, but rather like two roles something can fulfill. Matter is then what underlies all that is corpuscular,²⁸² the root of materiality and embodiment – but it is also a genuine Platonic universal – matter itself, that which is not just underlying all particular bodies, but is incorporeal and imperceptible, so not “material” in the usual sense of the word.²⁸³

B. Schelling

That matter can be both incorporeal and imperceptible and the root of materiality and embodiment can seem like a paradox. However, it is time to return to Schelling’s *Potenzenlehre* – more specifically, to the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*, the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* and to a lesser extent the *Allgemeine Deduktion des dynamischen Prozesses* in order to shed light on both the *Potenzenlehre* and this question of materiality. As the following analysis will show, Plato and Schelling illuminate each other in numerous interesting ways.

I would like to leap straight back into the thick of Schelling’s *Potenzlehre*. Ever since the *Outline of a System for a Philosophy of Nature*, Schelling has been inclined to look at nature

281 *PoNaS*, p. 34.

282 Without at that becoming an Aristotelian hypokeimenon, as the Aristotelian hypokeimenon is a merely logical substrate, and is not primary (see *PoNaS* pp. 30-38).

283 One can claim here, that this discussion of matter makes no sense. What does it really mean to say that matter in Plato’s theoretical framework is an Eidos? I am here primarily concerned with Schelling, so it would be outside the scope of this text to answer this objection extensively or to undertake an investigation into the meaning of the word “Eidos” in Plato, hence I cannot examine the consequences of the claim that matter is an Eidos for Plato’s doctrine. Nevertheless, I can point to a possible answer within Plato’s own corpus: the *Phaedo* demonstrates, that there is only one cause of both being and becoming, namely the idea. All ideas are a sort of attractor, towards which things become – that is what it means to be a model in Plato’s philosophy. Matter being an Eidos would then mean that it is the principle of generation of material things. To quote Plato: “I cannot understand these other ingenious theories of causation. If someone tells me that the reason why a given object is beautiful is that it has a gorgeous colour or shape or any other such attribute, I disregard all these other explanations – I find them all confusing – and I cling simply and straightforwardly, naively perhaps, to the explanation that the one thing that makes that object beautiful is the presence in it or association with it (in whatever way the relation comes about) of that other Beauty. I do not go so far as to insist upon the precise detail; only upon the fact that it is by Beauty that beautiful things are beautiful. This, I feel, is the safest answer for me or for anyone else to give, and I believe that while I hold fast to this I cannot fall; it is safe for me or for anyone else to answer that it is by Beauty that beautiful things are beautiful.” - Plato, *Phaedo* 100d-e.

as composed of actants, or proto-potencies.²⁸⁴ The logic behind this is simple: if a philosophical investigation of nature is to look at the unconditioned in nature, then it inevitably realizes that bodies cannot be unconditioned, because the unconditioned cannot be found in any individual thing. The unconditioned, then, is nature's incessant activity, and bodies are therefore secondary to primary actants that make them up. With the development of Schellingian philosophy, the concept of simple actant gets transformed into that of potency – a principle which makes up all natural phenomena – extension, magnetism, electricity, gravity, etc.

Let us begin with constructing a crude provisional sketch of the theory of potencies Schelling builds up throughout his work. This sketch will later be refined as I explore the second and third potencies and uncover more and more additional nuance. For now, however: the first potency, the starting point for the *Potenzlehre* is sheer ability, sheer Can. It is posited with a privation, the privation of a kind of being: it is not nothing, so not not A *tout court*, but not +A. Hence, it is -A.²⁸⁵ It lies at the beginning because, according to Schelling, thought cannot already begin with something determinate. To quote Thomas Buchheim: “[f]inge das Denken nicht in der steretischen Version von Bestimmung an, sondern mit irgendeiner Bestimmung selbst, so gäbe es kein Denken.”²⁸⁶ In the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* the function of -A is defined as follows:

[D]as Können als Schranke des Seyns gesetzt war, als das aus aller Schranke Getretene, an sich Grenz- und Bestimmungslose, also ganz gleich dem pythagorischen und platonischen Unendlichen (ἄπειρον), das freilich in der Erscheinung nicht anzutreffen; den alles Seyn, das in dieser sich findet, ist schon wieder ein in Schranken gefaßtes und begriffliches; indeß enthält die Erscheinung selbst Anzeichen, daß allem Seyn ein an sich schrankenloses, der Form und Regel widerstrebendes zu Grunde liegt. Dieses seiner selbst ohnmächtige, also für sich eigentlich nicht seyn könnende Seyn wird dennoch der Grund und Anfang seyn alles Werdens; und in aristotelischer Ausdrucksweise die erste, nämlich material Ursache alles Entstehenden.²⁸⁷

284 SW III 11: “Welcher Gegenstand Objekt der Philosophie seyn soll, derselbe muß auch als schlechthin *unbedingt* angesehen werden. Es fragt sich, inwiefern der Natur *Unbedingtheit* könne zugeschrieben werden. [...] *Erster Satz. Das Unbedingte kann überhaupt nicht in irgend einem einzelnen Ding, noch in irgend etwas gesucht werden, von dem man sagen kann, daß es ist. Denn was ist, nimmt nur an dem Seyn Theil, und ist nur eine einzelne Form oder Art des Seyns. - Umgekehrt kann man vom Unbedingten niemals sagen, daß es ist. Denn es ist das Seyn selbst, das in keinem endlichen Produkte sich ganz darstellt, und wovon alles Einzelne nur gleichsam ein besonderer Ausdruck ist.*” For English, see *First Outline*, 77.

285 See the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie*, SW XI, 288 and the long discussion of the distinction between μή ὄν (what exists non-actually) and οὐκ ὄν (what actually does not exist) in the *Darstellung des Philosophischen Empirismus* – SW X, 282-284.

286 *EvA*, pp. 119. English: “if thought did not begin in the steretic version of determination, but with some determination itself, there would have been no thought.”

287 SW XI 388. English: “The can-being is posited as the limit of being, as that which has stepped beyond all bounds, in itself devoid of border and definition, thus quite the same as the Pythagorean and Platonic indefinite (ἄπειρον), which is certainly not to come up in appearance, for all being found in appearance is already captured in bounds and conceptual. In this, appearance itself contains evidence that all being has as its

This, then, is Schellingian matter: unlimited, undefined, nothing in particular: the apeiron, and also the receptacle. It is the dark principle at the ground of creation, untouched by the light of reason. Is this all there is to Schelling's matter, though? Quite predictably, it turns out not. Just as the unlimited is offset by the limit introduced into it – which is how “real being” is generated in Plato's *Philebus*²⁸⁸ – the pure Can, -A, is offset by +A, “that which simply has being [das rein Seyende]”.²⁸⁹ -A wills +A, which serves as an attractor, and thus as a determinator.²⁹⁰ The -A determined by the +A therefore produces $\pm A$ as a result – real being, which is simultaneously that which is, and that which has the capacity to be, much like the Platonic *apeiron* into which *peras* is introduced produces real being.²⁹¹ In this process, however, the “material cause”, -A, now elevated to being in the end product $\pm A$ loses its potency, becomes the “blind existent” B, the existent which has “lost itself”.²⁹² Of the role of B Schelling write that it is “ausschließende[n] Seyn, denn es versagt dem nicht seyn Könnenden, der *potentia non existendi* (d. h. dem, was in der Indifferenz reines, durch kein Können affiziertes Objekt war), es versagt diesem das Seyn”²⁹³ – i.e., B's role is to exclude that which cannot be from the process of producing being; it determines that, which being cannot be. Schelling also calls it the “nicht seyn Sollende”,²⁹⁴ that which should not be – here, “should” is not to be read in any normative sense, but as that which has already been used up and discarded, and is not to be again. Just as +A defines by attraction, B defines the resultant being by negation, as it is “qualitätslose, wüste und leere” (without quality, desert and void).²⁹⁵ The cycle of material production brings the potency-to-be-everything to a state whereby this potency is turned into a sort of negative determination which I will in what follows call negative potentiation. This is what Thomas Buchheim also speaks about when he calls Schelling's matter “repulsive”: “Die Materie Schellings ist nicht prätentive, sondern repulsive Möglichkeit des Wirklichen; Materie ist der Rückstoß des Wirklichen”. “Repulsive” is here

ground something boundless, going against all form and rule. This of itself powerless being, thus unable to be for itself, becomes the ground and beginning of all becoming, and in Aristotelian parlance it is the first, namely the material cause of all emergence.”

288 *Philebus* 26d.

289 SW XI 390.

290 This is an interesting possible interpretation of Plato's doctrine of Ideas, presented by Iain Grant in his *Philosophies of Nature after Schelling*, where he writes: “the Idea acts as the limit-attractor towards which becoming never ceases to become” (*PoNaS*, p. 45). This reading would confirm the reading I propose of Phaedo in footnote 67, where Plato seems to claim that ideas direct the becoming of things.

291 Compare Frigo, G.: “Die Rolle der Mythologie in Spätphilosophie Schellings”. In Adolphi, R. und Jantzen, J. (Ed.): *Das antike Denken in der Philosophie Schellings*, Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt: 2014, pp. 275-304, hier pp. 291-293, although Gian-Franco Frigo reads the potencies explicitly as elements of original creation. Also note: in *Das Potenzlose* (p.29), Alejandro Jimenez identifies *apeiron* and *peras* with Bestimmbarkeit (determinability) and Bestimmung (determination).

292 It has lost itself - “[hat] sich selbst (seyne Potenz) verloren”. – SW X 308.

293 SW X, 308. English: “excluding being, for it denies being to that which can not be, to the *potentia non existendi* (i.e. to that which, in the indifference, was the pure object, not affected by any Can).

294 SW X, 285.

295 SW X, 312.

not meant in the classical naturphilosophical sense of repulsive and attractive forces, but rather signifies that, as B, matter for Schelling is the potency which determines by exclusion that which cannot be.²⁹⁶ The cycle of production, whereby -A is attracted by +A to become ±A, with the material principle -A turning into blind potency B, is reset once B transforms back to potency -A, thus becoming fertile ground for more production,²⁹⁷ as it repotentiates itself: B is here “selbstlose Materie, daß das außer sich gesetzte Prinzip sich selbst wider gegeben, seine selbst mächtig werde.”²⁹⁸ It must be noted, that it is only after this transformation – whereby B becomes the ground for another, transforming itself into -A – that it can be called matter in the full sense of the word: that out of which something else is made.

From the above we can conclude, therefore, that the Schellingian material principle is dual, much like its Platonic correlate;²⁹⁹ it is a dual potency, if it can be extricated from the workings of the other potencies and considered separately at all.³⁰⁰ Assuming that it meaningfully can – it is on one hand the pure Can, that which is unlimited and can become anything whatsoever, and on the other hand, once it becomes matter for something, it turns to passivity, whose role is to determine becoming in its transformation,³⁰¹ “disabling” certain

296 It is rather well-known that when Schelling talks about opposing forces, he is also, in addition to the forces of Kant’s writings on physics and nature, referring to the expansion and contraction of God, an idea he borrows from the theosophical writings of Oetinger and Böhme, who in turn take it from the Kabbalistic doctrine of Zimzum. For more on this, see Schulze, W.A. “Schelling und die Kabbala”. In *Judaica* 13 (1957), pp. 65-99, 143-170, 210-232.

297 SW X, 324.

298 SW X, 384. English: B is “the selfless matter, that which gives the principle posited outside of itself back to itself, making its self potent.”

299 “Alles Seynkönnen im transitiven Sinn, um den früher gebrauchten Ausdruck hier wieder anzuwenden, steht zwischen einem doppelten Seyn, dem von welchem es herkommt, und dem, welchem es zugeht, darum ist es seiner Natur nach doppelsinnig (*natura anceps*); Zweiheit (duas) im pythagorischen und platonischen Sinn, welche von selbst unbestimmte ist, ἀόριστον δυάιν, wie sie auch genannt worden.” – SW XI, 395-396. English: All Can-being in the transitive sense, in order to use an expression used previously here again, stands between a doubled being: that from which it originates and that to which it approaches. Thus it is according to its nature ambiguous (*natura anceps*); duality (duas) in a Pythagorean and Platonic sense, which by itself is undetermined ἀόριστον δυάιν, as it has been called.”

300 In a certain sense, the entire structure of the potencies is “material”. +A is similar to Plato’s concept of the Idea of matter (SW X 328): “Als Materie sind sie im Raum (wenn sie ihn auch noch nicht körperlich erfüllen – Materie ist eben nur Materie, d. h. Grundlage der Körper, aber *darum sofort nicht körperlich* [emphasis mine – DK]) - als Materie sind sie im Raum (jene Wesen), und in *der* Hinsicht, daß sie außereinander (im Raum) sind, sind sie nicht mehr Subjekte, als Subjekte sind sie ineinander, wie eben die allgemeine Attraktion zeigt, von der es ganz falsch ist sie als eine Wirkung der Materie anzusehen; auch wenn sie der Materie proportional erscheint, ist es falsch zu sagen, daß die Attraktion eine Wirkung der einzelnen Theile der materiellen Körper ist.” [English: “They are in space as matter (even if they do not fill it corporeally – matter is precisely only matter, i.e. the foundation of corpuscles, but hence straight away not corporeal – as matter they are in space (this essence) and in *this* respect in which they are in space outside each other, they are subjects no more. As subjects they are in each other, as demonstrated by general attraction, which should not be viewed as an effect of matter. Even if it appears to be proportional to matter, it is false to say that the attraction is an effect of the single particles of material body.”] We are however not interested here in a classification of the concepts of Schelling’s philosophy into “material” and “non-material” – but the question of how the potencies – in their materiality as much as in their other functions – function and how they can help us understand the process of predication according to Schelling.

301 Thomas Buchheim writes about this doubling of matter in *Eins von Allem* pp.54-55, especially pointing out the role of matter in becoming: “Zeugung wird von Schelling einmal sehr eindrücklich folgendermaßen

paths of material development becoming is to take, and thus directing the process of becoming. Matter for Schelling is thus a material principle and a function, a dually operating potency, a force of production – and a force of determination. The unlimited -A and the limiting B,³⁰² – this is the first potency, and this is Schelling’s matter. It remains to see how a similar conception of matter can be traced in predication theory, but before this chapter moves on to investigating matter as predication, it is worth the time to take a short look onto why this view of matter is so important.

Interjection: Matter as power

In *Cause, Principle and Unity*, Giordano Bruno writes: “Certainly, this principle, called matter, can be considered in two ways: first, as potency; second, as substratum.”³⁰³ From the above analysis, it is evident that both Plato and Schelling choose to treat matter as primarily potency – and therefrom make its being-substratum a part of its being-potency. And at any rate, even this substratum is, for both Plato and Schelling, not an inert *body* which somehow acquires its characteristics consequently to its state of being body. Platonic and Schellingian physics are not sciences of the body; they are not somatic. Both philosophers want to demonstrate how the world becomes material,³⁰⁴ how matter arises – for both the nature that we live in is a nature that has been generated, and at least to an overwhelmingly large extent has generated itself. If our philosophical understanding of matter is to be based in the existence of a fundamental body, a fundamental material entity, a mere substratum without potency, then we run the risk of being unable to trace the generation of this substratum – both in the sense that we would not be able to investigate how the substratum came about, but also in the sense that we would not be able to explain the powers this substratum possesses. In other words, we would find ourselves in a dualism of power and body.³⁰⁵ The question “is power derivative from body or is body derivative from power?” can be answered only in one way if we are to avoid this dualism. Following the Platonic tradition all the way to Schelling, then, we are led to conclude that matter is not reducible to any particular body or kind of body

definiert: „‘zeugen’ bedeutet nichts anderes als einem anderen, das von sich selbst nicht sein könnte, eine Materie zu seiner Verwirklichung geben.“ [English: “Generation is defined by Schelling very impactfully in the following way: “zeugen” means nothing but to give to an other, one which could not be out of itself, a matter for its actualisation.”]

302 Both +A and B are determining factors; attractors, just like in Plato there is an Idea of matter – matter itself, and other Ideas. B determines the material becoming qua material, +A determines it qua specific becoming. Ultimately, though, Schelling is more complex than Plato; and Schellingian “raw matter” can only be extracted at the cost of nuance and at the risk of abstraction.

303 Bruno, G. *Cause, Principle and Unity*. Ed. by R.J. Blackwell and Robert de Luca. Cambridge: 1998, p. 65.

304 *PoNaS*, p. 28.

305 See Iain Hamilton Grant on this, brilliantly, all over *Philosophies of Nature After Schelling*, for instance pp.73-74

– this is what the discussion in the *Timaeus* and in Schelling’s *naturphilosophical* works brings us to. An account which insists otherwise and wishes to keep its discourse of matter strictly somatic, discussing it in terms of ultimate basic particles with forces derivative solely from the interactions of these particles cannot but be mechanical. Thinking the construction (and destruction) of matter, however, requires dynamism. It is to an attempt of transposing this dynamism into the transcendental spheres that we now turn.

C. The matter of thought

The cycle of potencies crudely sketched in the previous section of this chapter is what Schelling calls the “self-construction of matter”.³⁰⁶ This self-construction is moreover repeated in nature at different levels, and since, according to Schelling, all natural phenomena result from the potentiation of matter, thinking and the structure of predication itself should therefore be a product of the potentiation of matter.³⁰⁷ If we are to examine the structure of potencies in predication, we are to examine the material principle of predication. In this business we will have an unlikely aid: the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, our thinking operates in judgment, which is the predication of a concept or category to an object of our appearance, having the structure “x is y”. In this operation of predication, the concepts are predicated of a certain object, the object of our appearance. This object of appearance is always “the non-empirical, i.e., transcendental object = X”.³⁰⁸ To quote Kant:

The pure concept of this transcendental object (which in all of our cognitions is really always one and the same = X) is that which in all of our empirical concepts in general can provide relation to an object, i.e., reality. Now this concept cannot contain any determinate intuition at all, and therefore concerns nothing but that unity which must be encountered in a manifold of cognition insofar as it stands in relation to an object.³⁰⁹

The transcendental object then is “something in general”, something which is moreover, according to Kant, a mere thought-entity – later in the *Critique*, Kant calls it “the concept of something in general.”³¹⁰ However, this is wishful thinking on Kant’s part (and he admits as much in the text): the transcendental object is present in every unifying manifold of cognition; it is the necessary condition for relating determinations to a certain object, something which

306 SW IV, 4.

307 “Das Dunkelste aller Dinge, ja das Dunkel selbst nach einigen, ist die Materie. Dennoch ist es eben diese unbekannte Wurzel aus deren Erhebung alle Bildungen und lebendigen Erscheinungen der Natur hervorgehen.” – Schelling, F. W. J.: Werke. Auswahl in drei Bänden. Leipzig: 1907, here vol. 1, p. 453. English: “The darkest of all things – darkness itself according to some – is matter. Nevertheless it is from the elevation of this unknown root that all creations and appearances of nature emerge.”

308 CPR A109.

309 Ibid.

310 CPR A251.

follows from the unity of apperception. It is thus not a mere concept, and not an idea (an idea being a complex pure concept going beyond any possibility for experience),³¹¹ but a ground for appearances, their foundation, and an integral element of their constitution:

The transcendental object that grounds both outer appearances and inner intuition is neither matter nor a thinking being in itself, but rather an unknown ground of those appearances that supply us with our empirical concepts of the former as well as the latter.³¹²

Moreover, if we follow Kant into his discussion of the transcendental ideal, we will see that it is also a transcendental object, one whose existence we have to postulate:

Nevertheless, among the cosmological ideas, the one occasioning the fourth antinomy presses us to venture so far as to take this step [of postulating the object of the idea]. For the existence of appearances, not grounded in the least within itself but always conditioned, demands that we look around us for something different from all appearances, hence for an intelligible object, with which this contingency would stop.³¹³

The transcendental object Kant wants to postulate here is the transcendental ideal, which is – along with the transcendental object Kant has been discussing so far – “the ground” for appearances.³¹⁴ In relation to the transcendental ideal, being called “the ground” means the same thing that it meant in relation to the transcendental object – the transcendental ideal is not a concept, and neither is it even really an idea. It is precisely a ground, thus needed for any and all concepts, with the exception of the a priori categories, to be generated. It is conceptually indeterminate and infinite³¹⁵ – any regulative ideal that is part of our cognition for architectonic purposes will “fall infinitely short of reaching [the transcendental ideal]”.³¹⁶ However, there is a difference between the transcendental ideal of pure reason and the transcendental object Kant speaks of throughout the critique. As Kant himself puts it:

311 CPR B 377 – “A concept is either an empirical or a pure concept, and the pure concept, insofar as it has its origin solely in the understanding (not in a pure image of sensibility), is called *notio*. A concept made up of notions, which goes beyond the possibility of experience, is an idea or a concept of reason.”

312 CPR A 307-308. See also B 566-7: “For since these appearances, because they are not things in themselves, must be grounded in a transcendental object determining them as mere representations, nothing hinders us from ascribing to this transcendental object, apart from the property through which it appears, also another causality that is not appearance, even though its effect is encountered in appearance.”

313 CPR B593-594.

314 CPR B 604.

315 Kant himself calls it indeterminate: “Now although this idea of the sum total of all possibility, insofar as it grounds everything as the condition of its thoroughgoing determination in regard to the predicates which may constitute the thing, is itself still indeterminate, and through it we think nothing beyond a sum total of all possible predicates in general, we nevertheless find on closer investigation that this idea, as an original concept, excludes a multiplicity of predicates, which, as derived through others, are already given, Or cannot coexist with one another; and that it refines itself to a concept thoroughly determined a priori, and thereby becomes the concept of an individual object that is thoroughly determined merely through the idea, and then must be called an ideal of pure reason.” CPR B 601-602.

316 CPR B 606.

The transcendental object lying at the ground of appearances, and with it the ground why our sensibility has it rather than another supreme condition - these are and remain inscrutable for us, even though the thing itself is given, only we have no insight into it. An ideal of pure reason, however, cannot be called inscrutable, because it has to display no further credentials for its reality than the need of reason to complete all synthetic unity by means of it.³¹⁷

The transcendental object, therefore, is “inscrutable” – dark and difficult, indeterminable, unlimited. It is that, which, being an object in general, can then be determined in any way – unlimitedly potential, the *apeiron* into which our machinery of cognition introduces a *peras*. It is the material potency of predication.³¹⁸ The transcendental ideal, on the other hand, is not “dark”, not “inscrutable” – it is that, which reason uses to achieve architectonic unity,³¹⁹ the fixed, unchanging idea-attractor towards which all our judgments and bits of reasoning tend, for reason is a system, and it seeks to build a unity. Moreover, this system is directly produced by the limitation, and the determinations it consists of: “the material for the possibility of all objects of sense has to be presupposed as given in one sum total; and all possibility of empirical objects, their difference from one another and their thoroughgoing determination, can rest only on the limitation of this sum total.”³²⁰ The dual complex transcendental ideal/transcendental object is thus the matter of predication, and the three functions of those transcendental objects are exactly parallel to the functions of -A and B – the matter in Schelling’s *Potenzenlehre*. On one hand, there is -A, first presented as the subject of existence,³²¹ the answer to the question “what do I think when I think what exists?”, which underlies all determination as -A. On the other hand, there is B – the potency-less negative power of determination, the domain of which grows with the growth of our conceptual inventory. Both are related to Schelling’s idea of the *Weltgesetz*, the law of fulfilling all possibilities, “daß alle Möglichkeiten sich erfülle, keine unterdrückt werde.”³²²

317 CPR B 642.

318 Since our concept of matter is truly “difficult and dark”, Kant himself suspects that it originates from the conceptualisation of the transcendental object. “[T]he transcendental object, however, which might be the ground of this appearance that we call matter, is a mere something, about which we would not understand what it is even if someone could tell us.” – CPR B 333.

319 “This highest formal unity that alone rests on concepts of reason is the purposive unity of things; and the speculative interest of reason makes it necessary to regard every ordinance in the world as if it had sprouted from the intention of a highest reason. Such a principle, namely, opens up for our reason, as applied to the field of experience, entirely new prospects for connecting up things in the world in accordance with teleological laws, and thereby attaining to the greatest systematic unity among them. The presupposition of a supreme intelligence, as the sole cause of the world-whole, but of course merely in the idea, can therefore always be useful to reason and never harmful to it.” CPR B 714-5.

320 CPR, B 610 – Schelling accepts the transcendental Ideal as matter: “die bloße Materie, der bloße Stoff alle besonderen Möglichkeit” [sheer matter, sheer stuff of all specific possibility]. – SW XI, 285.

321 SW X, 303.

322 SW XI, 492 – English: “that all possibilities are fulfilled and none suppressed”. When more possibilities are fulfilled, more elements excluded by the negative potency of determination – this works like a negative image of the transcendental ideal.

We have so far drawn, out of Plato and Schelling, a certain understanding of matter as potency. Matter, for both philosophers, is a dynamic production composed of two elements: an unlimited (*apeiron*, receptacle, -A) and the limiting factor (*peras*, matter-itself, B). If we accept such a concept of matter, we can see how the transcendental objects (=X and the transcendental ideal) of the *Critique of Pure Reason* play the role of a “matter of predication”. Schelling subscribes to this view of the transcendental objects as well, as is evidenced by his inheritance of the concept of the transcendental ideal and its appropriation as “the infinite potency to be” that forms the matter of thought in the following quote:

[D]as Seyende, so, wie es sich als unmittelbaren Inhalt der Vernunft zeigt (=unendliches Seynkönnen), ist ebensowohl es selbst als die Materie eines andern Seyns. Die Potenz (der unmittelbare Inhalt der Vernunft) ist an sich selbst das Unbestimmte (το αοριστον), inwiefern sie nämlich Potenz, Subjekt, Materie (denn dieß sind gleichbedeutende Ausdrücke), oder selbst das Seyende seyn kann.³²³

II. The Second Potency

Having considered the first potency of Schelling’s *Potenzenlehre* (-A – the subject of being, which turns to be matter, specifically the matter of predication for the purposes of this chapter) – I now turn to the second potency, +A. The *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* describes +A as mere existence “bloße Existenz” or pure Being, which in its kind is as infinite as the Can [“reines Sein, daß in seiner Art so unendlich ist wie das Können”]³²⁴, and as the subjectless object counterpart to -A’s objectless subject. This makes a discussion of +A, if such a discussion were to be conducted by taking +A in maximal abstraction from other potencies and the process they form as a triad, look particularly problematic. It seems that there is no way a philosophy could present what is absolutely subjectless without contaminating it with subjectivity.³²⁵ Schelling himself confirms that an object can be posited only in the aftermath of a subject:

Damit etwas Objekt ist, muß erst ein Subjekt da sein, dagegen im zweiten Gedanken kann ich dem Subjekt gegenüber ein Objekt setzen, man kann in den Gedanken nur vom Subjekt ausgehen.³²⁶

He also makes it clear, that being – anything that exists – is only the entire threefold of potencies taken together:

323 SW XIII, 76. See GPP 142-143 for English: “[B]eing is just as much Itself as well as the matter of a different being [Seyn]. The potency (the immediate content of reason) is indeterminateness per se (to αοριστον), insofar as it can be potency, subject, matter (since these are synonymous expressions), or even being [das Seyende].”

324 SW X, 305.

325 Compare *Passive Bewegtheit*, p. 382.

326 SW X, 304. English: “For something to be in object, a subject must first be present; although on second thought I can posit the subject against an object, we can only start from the subject in thought.”

Nun müssen wir aber sogleich hinzufügen, daß nicht das Subjekt, nicht das Objekt, und auch nicht das Dritte oder das Subjekt-Objekt, keines von diesen, wenn wir sie durch Zahlen bezeichnen, nicht 1, nicht 2, nicht 3 für sich ist *das Seyende*; das Seyende selbst ist erst, was $1+2+3$, ist.³²⁷

It could moreover be objected here that even in our discussion of the subject of being, we could only posit it as subject up for determination, so not alone or in itself.³²⁸ Indeed, this is what Schelling means when he says that one can posit -A only as second to +A: “[man kann] unmittelbar nur -A setzen, erst als das zweite von diesem (als das Angezogene desselben) +A = reines Seyn.”³²⁹ -A is to be posited immediately and first, and yet it is only to be posited as that which is necessarily subject to the determining power of the +A.³³⁰ Thus, if +A is to be considered in abstraction, as something that simply sheerly exists “out there”, a conceivable in-itself not affecting the subject of being and unaffected by it and yet somehow operative in the process of predication, then it ultimately suffers a sad fate akin to what the objects of Schelling’s “positive philosophy” would suffer, if “positive philosophy” was taken the way Schelling warns it should not be taken when objecting to the highly tempting “mystical” readings of it – i.e., all we could say about +A would be that it exists.

Nevertheless, the previous section had managed to consider the role of -A in the chains of potency operation as isolated from the other elements of the chain, without treating this abstraction of -A as any more than provisional. The role of -A has been studied by considering what kind of function it has to perform in order to be the sheer Can it needs to be within Schelling’s *Potenzenlehre*: the bigger structure that -A is a part of has not been completely ignored. Since -A is nothing but what is to be determined by +A, it has been treated as that which is to be functionally enmeshed with +A. +A in turn should be investigated similarly, i.e. functionally, with its function in the chain of potencies inferred from what it does to -A in the

327 SW XIII, 78. See *GPP*, 144: “Now we must promptly add that not the subject, object, and also not the third or the subject = object, none of these (if we indicate them with numbers, not 1, not 2, not 3, is, in its own right, being; being itself is only when $1+2+3$ are combined.”

328 Schelling says, in *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie*, calling potencies there “moments of what has being”: “Von jenen Momenten des Seyenden ist freilich keines ohne das andere, es ist hier alle wie in einem organischen Ganzen gegen sich wechselseitig bestimmend und bestimmt; das nicht seyende ist dem rein seyenden der Grund (die *ratio sufficiens*), aber hinwieder ist das rein seyende die bestimmende Ursache (*ratio determinans*) des bloßen An-sich-seyns, und auch das Dritte vermittelt den vorausgehenden ebenso Momente des Seyenden zu seyn, wie eben dieses ihm durch sie vermittelt ist; es müssen deßhalb alle oder es kann keines gesetzt seyn.” – SW XI, 311. English: “Of these moments of what has being, certainly no single one is without the other; here, like in an organic whole, everything is reciprocally determined and determining of each other. The non-being is the ground (die *ratio sufficiens*) of what purely has being, but, in turn, what purely has being is the determining cause (*ratio determinans*) of the sheer being-in-itself, and also the third mediates moments of what is being-to-be to the antecedent, precisely as the latter is then mediated through it; therefore either all must be posited or none can.”

329 SW X, 305.

330 Hence, when Schelling calls -A the Anziehungspunkt (point-attractor), it doesn’t seem to be his point that -A as the indeterminate potency attracts determination towards it, but rather that it is the point at which the force of attraction exerted on -A is applied, just like gravitational force is applied onto the centre of gravity of objects.

process of determination (here, predicative determination). Therefore, at no point does +A need to be treated as a placeholder for only one specific kind of entity, the definition of which cannot be given because it is inextricably bound with other entities. Instead, it will be treated as a dynamic function and part of a process, just as matter (-A/B) was. Since +A can be posited only in consequence of -A, and since the presence of -A is necessary for the function of +A to unfold, it turns out that the impossibility of presenting +A in isolation, untainted as it were by the “subject of being” is not an unfortunate deficiency in Schelling or in my account of him, but rather the expected turn of events. Any attempt to present +A in antecedence of -A, and therefore in antecedence of the effect it has on -A is doomed, because it is like any simple and simplistic attempt trying to discover the in-itself antecedent to thought. It should also not be forgotten, that Schelling’s *Potenzenlehre* scheme and by extension, the positions and arguments presented in this text are at heart transcendental; Schelling is never concerned with deriving or deducing the existence of something, including +A – such a tactic would be exactly what he, in agreement with Kant’s fundamental maxim “existence is not a real predicate” criticized in the *Grounding of Positive Philosophy*.³³¹ Rather, Schelling’s scheme begins from the reality of the becoming processes he wants to analyse and reconstruct, which he thinks can only be done from and via the potency triad he postulates: +A, in effect, is as fundamental as -A.³³² The *Potenzenlehre* deals with the question “how is there something rather than nothing?”, with the mode of something arising; the “why” is a separate quest.

331 See for instance the fifth lecture of the *Grounding*, which looks at the difference between being and essence (Sein and Wesen), and consequently the difference between positive and negative philosophy. In that lecture, Schelling describes the paradox of being: we can ascribe being to an object, but this operation does not add anything to this object: “Das Seyende muß allerdings zuerst Subjekt des Seyns - das was seyn kann -, insofern die Potenz des Seyns seyn, aber nicht die Potenz von etwas, das es *noch nicht ist* (denn da wäre es ja eben nicht das Seyende), sondern die Potenz dessen, *was es schon Ist*, was es unmittelbar und ohne Uebergang ist. Nochmals: das Seyende, das wir suchen, ist unmittelbar und im ersten Gedanken Potenz des Seyns, Subjekt, aber Subjekt, das unmittelbar seine Erfüllung mit sich hat (das Subjekt an sich eine Leere, die erst durch das Prädicat erfüllt werden muß) - das Seyende ist daher ebenso unmittelbar das seyende, als es das seynkönnende ist, und zwar das *rein* seyende, das ganz und völlig objektiv seyende, in dem ebenso wenig etwas von einem Können ist als in dem Subjekt etwas von einem Seyn [...]” – SW XIII 77. For English, see *GPP*, p. 143.

332 The fact that thinking about +A presupposes thinking about -A does not mean that +A is, in the ontological-functional scheme of potencies, consequent or secondary. Indeed, the relationship of depending on each other for existing is different from that of presupposition here: -A and +A depend on each other for existence, but thinking about +A presupposes thinking about -A: “Aber eben weil das eine subjekt- wie das andere absolut objektlos ist, kann keines von beiden für sich bestehen ohne das andere. Dem Seyn ist das Können Subjekt, dem Können das Seyn Objekt, die Unendlichkeit des Seyns in dem einen macht den Abgrund des nicht-Seyns in dem andern möglich, umgekehrt fordert die Unendlichkeit des nicht-Seyns in dem einen eine gleiche Unendlichkeit des Seyns in dem andern - beide zusammen, also weder das erste noch das zweite für sich, sind nur erst das Seyende.” – SW X, 304. English: “But precisely because the one is subjectless just as the other is objectless, none can exist for-itself without the other. Can is subject to Being, Being is object to Can, the infinity of being in one makes the abyss of non-being in the other possible, and vice-versa: the infinity of non-being in one stipulates the infinity of non-being in the other. Only both together, so neither the first, nor the second for-itself, are first that which has being”.

The following section of this chapter will continue with this approach to first look at the role of +A in the general abstract structure of potencies (“in the idea”,³³³ as Schelling puts it) and second, apply the scheme to the fairly specific domain of transcendental structures operative in predication. In the course of this investigation, a peculiar inversion within the chain of potencies that makes the potency-subject into a potency-object and vice versa and which Schelling calls “*Universio*” will also be looked into. I will argue that the *Universio* is indeed a relative inversion within the series of the potencies, and that this, if taken merely in relationship to the question of predication, does not mean anything more (or less) than the mutual conditioning of mind, which sets conceptual determination unto any pre-conceptual “given” and world, which after all affects the mind perceiving it.

A. Object of Being

In direct opposition to -A, the subject of being, +A plays the role of pure object. Schelling calls it that mere existence or pure Being (“bloße Existenz oder reines Seyn”)³³⁴ or what can *not* be (“was nicht seyn kann”, i.e. what can cease to be),³³⁵ i.e. that which already is so that the only power it has is the power not to be; this power not to be is its *can*. He also defines the relationship between -A and +A as follows:

Unmittelbar und *primo progressu* kann nur reines Subjekt, erst nach diesem *secundo loco* reines Objekt gesetzt werden, welche beide, da jenes nur das Anziehende von diesem, dieses nur das Angezogene von jenem seyn kann, um ihrer gegenseitigen Anziehung das Seyende darstellen, aber doch nicht eigentlich sind.³³⁶

There is reciprocal attraction between -A and +A, so that the first is attracted by the second. Taking Iain Hamilton Grant’s reading of Plato mentioned in the previous chapter – one according to which Ideas are nothing but attractors directing the becoming of individual things, the continuing parallel between -A and +A on one hand and the Platonic concepts of *apeiron* and *peras* on the other is very suggestive and tempting, raising questions about Schelling’s relationship to Platonism. In the *Potenzenlehre* we have an element which is boundless and indeterminate (“aus alle[n] Schranke[n] getretene[n], an sich Grenz-und Bestimmungslose”),³³⁷ and another element which determines this first (“[zum ersten Element als] die bestimmende Ursache (*ratio determinans*) sich verhaltende”).³³⁸ At a first glance, this looks exactly like the Platonic scheme for determination – there is something which does not

333 SW X, 305.

334 SW X, 305.

335 SW X, 306.

336 SW X, 304. English: “Immediately and *primo progressu*, the pure subject can only be posited after the *secundo loco* pure object, and as the former can only be the attractor of the latter, the latter only the attracted by the former, both together present the existent in their reciprocal attraction, but are not properly it.”

337 SW XI, 388. English: “that which oversteps all boundaries, in itself bound-less and definition-less”.

338 SW XI, 311. English: “relating itself [to the first element] as a determinate cause.”

have being, but is pure fluidity and becoming, which is nevertheless “pulled” towards being by receiving an “imprint” of that which is fixed pure being. However, this similarity holds only if we are comparing the two abstract schemes (as Schelling puts it, “in the Idea”³³⁹) without looking at the mode of operations of the two schemes – or to be more precise, of the Schellingian scheme, as its Platonic counterpart, in addition to being simply not the focus of the investigation here, is never expanded upon as a scheme of becoming per se, beyond the very figurative presentation given in the *Timaeus* discussed in the previous section. The previous section has also argued that in the Schellingian scheme of potencies, the matter -A is not, for every case of becoming, some “scoop” of formless stuff taken from the same bottomless reserve of pure Can. Rather, when it comes to the analysis of the potencies in the production of definite things, we discover that the role of -A can be played by different objects – anything which can be destroyed as what it is in order to generate something other than itself (which translates into anything whatsoever) can assume the function of -A. To present this in a simplified way – at a certain crude level, the zygotes a pregnant cat carries are literally matter for kittens, because over the process of the cat’s pregnancy, they are going to stop being merely zygotes and become full-fledged small furry mammals – they are the kittens’ matter, and functionally they are -A. Following this logic, namely that potencies are functional roles which can be fulfilled by different things and their powers – Schelling’s scheme of *peras* and *apeiron* is simply that of *something*, which does not even have to be a *thing*, but could be a locus of productivity, playing the role of something to be put under determination, while *something else* is playing the role of the determining factor. To continue with the crude feline example, the kittens’ DNA would be the major determining factor. Therefore, an identification of +A with the Idea is problematic – it would seem that Schelling and Plato, when dealing with their accounts of natural becoming, operate at different levels of abstraction at the very least.³⁴⁰

However, this fairly simple relation between the determining and the determined factors is not all there is to the interaction between -A and +A. If it merely were the case that determination functioned straightforwardly in one direction with +A determining -A entirely without the latter’s functional “resistance” and consequently at least some degree of mutual determination, then the potential for creating novelty in a certain determination operation would be quickly exhausted by this one-sidedness: the determining potencies of +A would be completely exhausted in the product of the determination process ($\pm A$) producing, in effect, a product that is not novel, but merely another instance of +A. The cycle would have been merely capable of

339 SW XI, 305.

340 In other words: in Plato, the *apeiron* and *peras* can be only matter and the Idea. In Schelling, different entities or activities can play the roles of -A und +A.

endlessly repeating itself, or even worse – be static and nothing but. The whole point of the *Potenzenlehre*, however, is to explain, at multiple levels, the production of novelty – that is what potentiation is in the first place. Thus we can only conclude that this interaction between the two potencies is not unidirectional. Confirming, Schelling proposes a mechanism for a solution, which unfortunately turns to be one of the most unclear and, apparently, deceptively complex spots of the *Potenzenlehre* – the *Universio*.³⁴¹ It is to this mechanism that I now turn. If -A and +A are the functional elements of the potentiation process and $\pm A$ is the tentative endpoint, the *Universio* is a “fulcrum” of the process – the point at which a chaining series of determinations, with each consequent grounded in the antecedent, becomes possible, because -A and +A are inverted due to co-determination.³⁴² This simple explanation is behind Schelling’s following cryptic passage:

Betrachten wir den hier geforderten oder als möglich gezeigten Vorgang im Allgemeinen, so erscheint er als ein Vorgang der Umkehrung und zwar einer Umkehrung des Einen, des vorwirklichen Seyenden, des Prototyps aller Existenz, indem, was in diesem das Subjekt ist, -A zum Objekt, was Objekt ist (+A) zum Subjekt wird. Dieser Vorgang kann daher die *Universio*, genannt werden, das unmittelbare Resultat des Vorgangs ist das umgekehrte Eine – *Unum versum*, also Universum.³⁴³

It is no wonder the passage is cryptic, for the *Universio* is difficult to explain without attaching inaccurate terms to it. It is to be described purely functionally, just like the potencies, although Schelling identifies it with the universe, i.e. with an entity. Generally speaking, it is a movement which occurs to the operative function +A and interchanges the functions of the two potencies. The “One” Schelling speaks about is nothing other than the entire process of potentiation.³⁴⁴ It is called the “pre-actually existent” [“vorwirkliche Seyende”] and the

341 For a very clear presentation of the concept of the *Universio*, see *Metaphysik und Invention*, p. 243.

342 On this point compare *Unendliche Mangel*, pp.192-193 and 213-215.

343 SW X, 311, English: “If we consider the procedure postulated or shown as possible here, it appears as a procedure of inversion, and at that an inversion of the One, of the pre-actual existent, of the prototype of all existence, in that what in this subject is -A turns to object and what is object (+A) to subject. This procedure can thus be called *Universio*, and the immediate result of the procedure is the inverted One – *Unum Versum*, thus Universe.” See also 309-310: “Zu dem Ende aber müßte es selbst auf die Stellung verzichten, die es bis jetzt noch eingenommen, es müßte die Stelle des Seynkönnenden oder Subjekts, an der es sich noch behauptet, aufgeben, um sie dem +A einzuräumen, es selbst müßte gegen +A vielmehr Objekt (ihm gegenständlich) werden, sich ihm als Materie seiner Verwirklichung unterordnen, sich gegen +A materialisieren [...]”. English: “To this end, however, it must have first relinquished the stance which it has until now taken, it must have given up the place of the Can-Be or the subject to which it still holds itself, in order to accommodate +A, it must have become object to +A (opposed to it), subordinate itself as matter for +A’s actualisation, materialise itself against +A”.

344 Schelling writes what the “One” is at different point in his work. It is the grounding existing unity which is subdivided into the three potencies; and then it becomes the entirety of the tripartite potecy series: “Nun aber ist es Zeit, auf das Seyende zurückzusehen und auf die Elemente desselben, wie diese sich verhalten, nachdem Eines Ist das sie ist. Also, diese Unterschiede sind nun seine Unterschiede, dieses bestimmten Einen, das in ihnen Anfang, Mittel und Ende seiner selbst, aus sich selbst (in seinem an-sich-Seyn), durch sich (als das außer-sich-Seyende), in sich (das ewige bei-sich-Seyn) gehend. Das bei-sich-Seyn ist das Mittlere vom an sich und außer sich seyenden, bei sich ist nur was auch außer sich ist. Nicht das Subjekt, nicht das Objekt, nicht das Subjekt-Objekt Ist, sondern das bestimmte Eine ist das Subjekt, ist das Objekt, und ist das Subjekt-Objekt[...]” (SW XI, 317) English: “However it is now time to look back at what is being and to its elements, how

“prototype of all existence” [“Prototyp aller Existenz”] not because it is some sort of model like the one Plato’s demiurge uses to create the universe in the *Timaeus*, but merely because it is the sequence of stages that nature follows in order to develop – existing “pre-actually”, potentially, like a law of nature which does not pre-exist nature itself, but is the way the “puzzle pieces” fall when nature actualizes. It is also the schematic in accordance with which our faculties operate in order to understand nature, so it is the “prototype” in the sense that every construction we have of nature and natural products necessarily – according to Schelling – unfolds like the One does, and harbours this inversion at its middle. The inverted progression of the potencies is the world, and the obverse of the One is the All.³⁴⁵ The inversion is nevertheless purely relative, and Schelling confirms it:

[...D]iese ganze Umwendung in das Objekt bloß relativ zu nehmen ist; denn in sich bleibt das, was gegen +A auf seine Innerlichkeit verzichtet, in sich bleibt es immer Subjekt, nur relativ gegen +A macht es sich äußerlich und zum Objekt, nämlich zum Gegenstand der Ueberwindung durch +A; es macht sich hiermit der ausgeschlossenen *Potentia non existendi* nur erst zugänglich, überwindlich; aber es ist noch keineswegs überwunden, es ist in sich noch, was es zuvor war, und nur gegen die höhere passiv und in der Bereitheit, Modifikationen von ihm anzunehmen.³⁴⁶

To paraphrase Schelling here: despite the inversion, the role of -A is still to stop being what it is and “absorb” determinations from +A; the role of +A is still to exert these determinations. -A still functions as a subject for these determinations, i.e., it is still antecedent to +A in the sense that +A needs it to fulfill its function – let us call this “functional antecedence” in order to distinguish it from causal antecedence. The point behind the inversion of the potency scheme is, in light of those considerations, clear enough. However, the above passages leave the reader wondering how the inversion happens and what exactly Schelling means when he insists that it is in the movement of the *Universio* that the universe – our universe, with planets

they behave, after One Is, which is them. Thus, these differences are now its differences, the differences of the determined One, its own in their beginning, middle and end, going out of itself (in its being-in-itself), though itself (as what is being-outside-itself), and in itself (eternal being-next-to-itself). Being-next-to-itself is intermediary being between in and outside itself; something is next to itself just when it is also outside itself. Neither the subject, the object, nor the subject-object is, but rather the determinate One is the subject, is the object, and is the subject-object[...].” The potencies culminate at an eschatological end, and it seems that at this end, the One is no more the tripartite unity, but once again a One in full sense of the world. I will explore this topic further in chapter V.

345 The obverse of the One is not only the All, but also universality – it enters into the picture exactly at the moment of the inversion, because it is at that moment that our predication machinery acquires the possibility to use universals, as it determines the object of an instance of predication. More about this in what follows and in chapter VI.

346 SW X, 310. English: “[...T]his entire inversion into the object is to be taken merely relatively; for it remains in itself that which renounces its inner character against +A, in itself it always remains subject and only relative to +A does it make itself external and Object, namely object of overcoming through +A. It makes itself thus only accessible to the extant *Potentia non existendi*; in itself it is still what it was before, and only passive against the higher, and in its readiness to accept modifications from it.

and solar systems – arises from such a moment of inversion.³⁴⁷ In order to get clearer on this and since my investigation in this text is dealing with transcendental structures and their role in predication, I will now appeal to the powers of Kant's first *Critique* in order to map the functional roles of Schelling's potencies onto a transcendental philosophy and demonstrate how the inversion Schelling discusses operates in case of predication.

B. The Birth of the Universe

The *Universio* is, as we see later in the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*, a “revolution”, in the sense in which a periodic system can be said to undergo revolutions. Schelling himself describes it thus:

[Das *Universio* passiert g]anz gemäß dem allgemeinen Begriff der Umkehrung, der *universio*, durch welche uns das Universum entsteht, gemäß außerdem jener durchgängigen Ironie, nach welcher die Letzten die Ersten und die Ersten die Letzten werden, und so auch das Innerste eigentlich bestimmt ist das Aeußerste, das Aeußerste dagegen das Innerste zu werden[...]³⁴⁸

Through the *Universio*, the universe arises *to us*. The little addition “to us” is key, and it is the reason why, if we want to see how the sequence of the potencies gives rise to the universe, we have to look at transcendental structures. If the universe we are talking about here is the universe that is the object of our experience – and in the entire broader framework of post-Kantian German idealism, there is no other way to talk about the universe anyway – then it is the universe constructed through the application of the transcendental structures. Granted, this is not a construction *ex nihilo* and no German idealist would insist on this point stronger than Schelling (“Denn nicht weil es ein Denken gibt, gibt es ein Seyn, sondern weil es Seyn ist, gibt es Denken”),³⁴⁹ but it is nevertheless a construction. The universe being described in this *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* passage is one which stands in a relationship of reciprocal determination with the subject. To use a rather handy concept which Iain Hamilton Grant³⁵⁰ borrows from the work of Gilles Chatelet, the universe which is produced here by the structure of the potencies and their inversion is a universe which does not contain the act of thought thinking it, but extains it, where extainment is the exertion of “border authority” upon the surroundings of such an authority.³⁵¹ This setting allows us to re-affirm the pertinent point

347 See *Eins von Allem* on material possibility and the world; *EvA*, pp. 34-35.

348 SW X 330-331. English: “[The *Universio* unfolds] fully according to the general concept of inversion, the *universio*, through which the universe arises to us in accordance, moreover, with that thoroughgoing irony, according to which the last become the first and the first become the last, and so that the innermost, properly determined, is to become the most external, and the most external is to become the innermost [...]”

349 SW XIII, 161. English: “It is not because there is thinking that there is being, but because there is being that there is thinking”.

350 Iain Hamilton Grant, “How Nature Came to Be Thought. Schelling's paradox and the problem of location” in *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* (2013), 44 (1). pp. 24-43. (p.39)

351 Grant argues that when Schelling uses the word “ausschließen”, what he means is not “exclusion” or “elimination”, but rather precisely this definitional dynamic introduced by Chatelet. Chatelet's “extainment” is a

part of a conceptual opposition between it and containment. In this opposition, containment is defining space (conceptual or otherwise) which falls within the container, while extainment is taken as containment's inverse: it is an operation of defining space which the extainer is not a part of. To think about this spatially some more: an object A placed inside another object B extains the object B – it defines that area inside B in which it is, however, not present. In addition, the relationship of extainment maps onto that of antecedence and consequence: for instance, the consequent fruit born by the tree as its antecedent ground is extained by the tree when it forms as a fruit and is differentiated from the tree. The fruit defines the border line between it, and the tree, as it were. While the German “ausschließen”, especially in the tradition of German idealism, this connotation is not obvious in English, and hence I will use the words “extain” and “extainment” to highlight this. This is relevant here because the universe in question in the statement “through the universio, the universe arises for us” is a universe produced with the active participation of thought rather than the universe which is antecedent to thought and which produces this thought in the course of its natural history. That extainment is not exclusion or elimination is evident from the discrepancy between the ways in which Schelling uses the word “ausschließen” in the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* and the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*. In lecture 13 of the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie*, Schelling claims that the potencies do not *ausschließen* one another: “Von Ausschließen haben wir zwar früher gesprochen, aber dieß war nur im Gedanken gemeint; zum wirklichen Ausschließen gehörte, daß eines für sich seyn wollte; aber hier ist vielmehr jedes von sich abgewendet, – A das Könen nicht von sich selbst, sonder von +A, beide zusammen das Könen von $\pm A$, alle zusammen von dem was allein das selbst Seyende ist. (Sie schließen sich so wenig aus als im mathematischen Punkt, den man als den Kreis in potentia ansehen kann, Mittelpunkt, Umkreis und Durchmesser sich ausschließen.) Sie schließen sich nicht aus, weil sie nicht drei Seyende sind, keines ein Seyn für sich anspricht, das Seyn vielmehr allein dessen ist, zu dessen Attribut sie werden, zu dem sie sich als bloße Prädicate verhalten, ihr eignes Seyn also in bloßer Potenz bleibt.” (SW XIII, 318). [English: “We have spoken previously of “ausschließen”, but this was only meant in thought; it would belong to the real extainment that one would want to be for itself, but here this is only averted from itself. - A is the Can not of itself, but of +A, they both the Can of $\pm A$, all together of that which is alone itself that which has Being. (They thus extain one another just as little as in the mathematical point, which one can be seen in the circle as potency, where the center, circumference and diameter extain one another). They do not extain each other because they are not three have-beings, none of them has claim to being for itself, being is moreover only of that whose attribute they become, that to which they relate as pure predicate, so their own Being remains in the mere potency.”] In the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* however, Schelling seems to take the opposite stance. Outside the Idea, i.e., once the potencies are taken as more than merely an abstract scheme and become operative in nature, Schelling speaks about their extainment, them engaging each other in a relationship of Ausschließen: “Wie können also die Momente, d. h. wie können - A + A $\pm A$ zu für sich seyenden werden, wie sich gegenseitig ausschließen? Denn das Erste oder das seyn Könnende (- A), solange es bloß dieses ist, solange es die reine Potenz bleibt, die es ist, so lang ist es von dem Zweiten oder von dem, was nicht seyn kann (+A), nicht unterschieden, und ebenso sind beide, das, was seyn, und das, was nicht seyn kann, von dem seyn und nicht seyn Könnenden ($\pm A$), und umgekehrt ist dieses von ihnen nicht ausgeschlossen; eine Ausschließung entsteht erst, wenn das seyn Könnende geht, d. h. wenn es sich ins Seyn erhebt.” (SW X, 306) [English: How could the moments, i.e. how could - A + A $\pm A$ become beings for-themseves, how do they reciprocally extain one another? For the first or the Can-be (-A), as long as it is only this, as long as it remains pure potency, which it is, so long as it is not distinguished from the second or from that which can not be (+A) and therefore both (that which can be and that which can not be) are both not extained from that which can be and can not be ($\pm A$) and the latter not extained from them; an extainment arises first when the Can-being is gone, i.e. when it raises itself into being”, nor conversely the latter from the former; an extainment arises only when what can be functions, i.e. when it is raised into Being]. The discrepancy might look like an inconsistency, but I would like to argue that it's actually not. In the first instance, Schelling is using the word “ausschließen” to mean exclusion or elimination, and the potencies do not exclude or eliminate each other; they underlie as hypo-theses, determining each other. In the second passage, Schelling is affirming extainment not because he has suddenly decided that the potencies now *eliminate* one another: the telling sign is him using the word “reciprocally”. In the second passage, Schelling is using “ausschließen” to mean reciprocal border definition, i.e., determination. The German is used in both sense of the word, and while Grant could be taken to claim, that it is insufficient to capture the meaning of the word “extain” (“In the extainer/container contrastive pair, in other words, there would be no negative and positive space. Rather, all parts of space are actors. The interaction between them, in other words, is importantly not linear, as the one involves the other in the production of boundaries, such that complex forms like knots are themselves neighbourhoods formed of iterations of this couple. Moreover, as a logic of form in general, it is indifferent to the domain it spatialises or is, as Châtelet puts it, it is “autospaciality”. In other words, this is the localisation process that effects any entity whatever, the only constraint being therefore that its universality ensures that it neither begins nor ends in a form of all forms or in a featureless universe.” – Grant 2014, 29), the

Grant draws from Schelling's work, where it is hidden in plain sight, as it were: there are two ways to consider the concept of "universe", and those two ways ultimately correspond to different things. One is the universe antecedent to our mind, antecedent to transcendental structures and thinking things – sheer objective nature "before thought", while the other is the universe consequent on the mind, the "whole world" that "lies in the nets of reason",³⁵² to quote Schelling. Grant elaborates on this quote in order to make the stakes of this world-doubling here:

The difficulty here is clearly expressed: it is the *whole* world (WW) that reason captures and there is more than reason in the world (W). But if W contains "more" than WW, then either reason, being part of W, does not for that reason contain WW and the statement simply contradicts itself, or the wholeness of the world is an artefact of the reason that contains it, so that the "whole world" is *less than* the world, an abstraction from it, perhaps. [...S]ince the option of taking the whole world in reason and reason to be in the world to form a contradiction is effectively ruled out by the formulation's concision on the one hand and the fact of its exact repetition after a decade and a half on the other, WW must be considered an artefact, and the assumption will be that if it is an artefact, then it is one of reason, i.e. simply a concept.³⁵³

So, the universe which is produced as a result of the inversion here is a conceptual version of the universe. What remains in order to locate the elusive +A of predication is to map out how the *Universio* as a conceptual and transcendental structure plays out, and try to distill the functional second potency from there.

For clarity's sake, we will divide the operation of predication into two movements (the word used here in analogy with musical movements): both would reflect the status of predicative potencies in the process of predication, with the first movement being the disposition of potencies before the inversion and the second – the disposition after. In the first movement of the operation of predication we have the transcendental object = X, matter, pure Can, functioning as the first potency -A. It is a transcendental structure, i.e., part of the machinery of the mind. It is also the subject, in the sense of that which is being subject to determination. We cannot help but notice that in being the subject of determination, it is an object to be determined: there is already an equivocation in how the two terms "subject" and "object" are used, and more will be said about this in what follows. In this first "movement" at the outset of determination, we must ask ourselves: what is it that could play the role of +A? What is it that determines our experience? If we here take Schelling's definitions of +A at face value, as simply as we can, then we get +A being pure existence and the *object* of being, and it would

word "ausschließen" has been used in German idealism to mean reciprocal determination, even in the sense of the law of excluded middle, as Kant used it when he had theorized the principle of thoroughgoing determination (see chapter I).

352 SW X, 143.

353 *Nature Thought*, p. 27.

follow that the world in-itself – or rather, whatever bit of it that triggered determination in an instance of predication – would be in this case assuming the role of +A in order to determine our experience. This is consistent with Schelling’s texts, and yet problematic in the sense that we cannot meaningfully speak about this instance of +A. Trying to think it or seek knowledge about it would effectively amount to an attempt to think or know the thing-in-itself constitutively. In this instance, in this movement of predication, we do not know what +A is beyond its role as a determinator and an object (in the sense of being non-subject), and this is all that is knowable.

Following the movement of the *Universio*, I would argue it is the following initial mapping that gets inverted:

-A: transcendental structure, namely object = X, subject for determination vs. +A: object of experience antecedent to experience.

The previous section dealing with -A has already traced, through the dual nature of matter, the inversion which happens as regarding this first potency: -A, losing the potency to be anything whatsoever becomes B, pure passivity, the blind extanting existent, whose function it is to determine merely negatively. To reiterate the point that -A becomes a negatively determining factor once it has spent its potencies and become B, I would like to quote the following passage in the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie*:

Denn die jetzt selbst- und machtlose Potenz – sie war auch in der Idee nicht für sich, sondern das Unterworfene (*subjectum*) und Untergeordnete einer höheren, des rein Seyenden (+A), und es war dieses ihr selbst die Stufe, also der Weg zum Prinzip, d. h. zum Seyn, wie sie umgekehrt diesem Grund der Möglichkeit war. Denn wir sagten, sie sey dem rein seyenden das Können. Aber das war von ihr nur geredet, sofern sie bloßes Können (reines – A) ist. Indem sie also in das Seyn sich erhebt, ist sie jenem vielmehr das Nichtkönnen, d. h. sie negirt es: das unversehene Seyn wirkt aufhebend auf das rein seyende, aufhebend in dem doppelten Sinn des deutschen wie des lateinischen Worts (*tollere*). Das Seyn des rein seyendem ist ein rein aus-, nicht auf sich selbst zurückgehendes, auf dieses wirkt das Seyn, das zuvor nicht war, hemmend, aber eben damit wird jenes in sich selbst zurückgetrieben; das rein seyende bekommt eine Negation, d. h. eine Potenz, ein Selbst in sich, das zuvor selbstlose wird sich selbst gegeben, *ex actu puro*, das es war *in potentiam* gesetzt, so daß jetzt beide Elemente gleichsam die Rollen getauscht haben: was in der Idee negativ war, positiv, was positiv, negativ geworden ist.³⁵⁴

354 SW XI, 389. English: “For the now self- and powerless potency – it was also in the idea not for itself, but subjugated (*subjectum*) and subordinated to a higher one, to that which purely has being (+A) and this itself was a step for it, i.e. a way to the principle, that is, to being, as it (-A), conversely, was the ground of possibility of this has-being. For we say: it is the Can to the pure has-being. But that was said of it only insofar as it is sheer Can (pure -A). Thus insofar as it lifts itself into being, it is rather the Not-can to the pure has-being, i.e. it negates the pure has-being: the property-less being has a sublating influence on the purely being, sublating in the double sense of both the German and the Latin term (*tollere*). The being of the pure has-being is a pure extinguishing, not self-reversing. On it, the being which previously was not, acts as an inhibitor, but precisely therewith it is driven back into itself; the pure has-being acquires a negation, i.e. a potency, a self in itself, and the previously selfless is given self, *ex actu puro*, that it was posited *in potentiam*, so that now both elements have exchanged roles: what was negative in the idea has become positive and what was positive, negative.”

It can be seen in this passage that the previous subject for determination is no longer the subject in any sense; now it is merely out there, objectified and negative, eliminating what cannot be: it negates the Can.³⁵⁵ Instead of being the subject to which predicates might be ascribed, it becomes the subjugated subject.³⁵⁶ Its relation to whatever subjugatingly exerts positive potentiation (a form of determination; more will be said on this very soon) upon it in that moment inverts and it becomes an object. This might seem like a superficial inversion that just plays with the ambiguous meanings of the words “subject” and “object” hinted at above, but it is not merely that: the functional roles of intellect and world are also reversed. -A, B’s “precursor”, was a transcendental structure, but the B which recedes in this second moment of determination, insofar as it is that which recedes from the process of determination by being that which does not participate in this process at the conceptual level, but by merely extaining from the object under those determinations which are not applicable to it, is not entirely part of the transcendental structures anymore. This is a point of inter-involvement between mind (which after all is still part of the world) and world (which now is also inextricably bound with the activity of the mind), in which transcendental structures operate in a certain way – specifically, the transcendental object = X is anything whatsoever, and it is determined through disjunctive syllogism, which grounds the fact that, once we have given the transcendental object = X some determination, it, in becoming the product $\pm A$ generates a field of extainment B, whereby it determines what things around it are not, and things around it in turn determine what it is not. Incidentally, this is why Schelling claims that it is only B,

We must however remember, that in this moment the negative determination B withholds a part of its independence and is not fully subjected. It is still active by extaining determination, something we can see in SW X 312: “Wir nehmen also an, daß die beiden Principien in die Herrschaft sich theilen, sich, so zu sagen, darüber vergleichen, auf die Weise nämlich daß das im Allgemeinen zur Unterordnung, zum ὑποκείμενον der höheren Potenz bestimmte Prinzip dennoch nicht unbedingt unterworfen, daß ihm verstatet werde, zum Theil selbständig, unberührt von der entgegengesetzten Potenz für sich zu seyn, anderntheils sich eben dieser Potenz ganz unterzuordnen und zur Ueberwindung völlig hinzugeben.” English: “We thus assume that both principles share dominance, that they, so to speak, even out in such a way that the principle determined in general to subordination, to be the ὑποκείμενον of the higher potency, is nevertheless not unconditionally subordinate and that it is allowed to it to become in part independent, untouched by the opposite potency, for-itself and, in other part, to give itself completely over to subordination and overcoming.”

355 In case this is not clear: the determination +A effects is the source of novelty, while the passive determination coming from the gradual limitation and cast-off of potential in B is merely the foreclosing of certain potentialities.

356 SW XI 398: “Der Preis also, um den es sein äußeres Seyn gleichsam erkaufte, ist, daß es dem, welchem es im Innern unterworfen oder Subjekt war, daß es diesem sich im Aeußern ebenso unterwirft und einmal wirklich geworden zum Stoff sich hingibt. Diesen Moment können wir demnach auch als den Moment des Materie Werdens oder auch der Grundlegung bezeichnen, und es wird auch nicht zweifelhaft seyn, welche Wissenschaft in diesem Reich der reinen Quantitätsbestimmungen sich bewegen und das zur Materie herausgewendete Eine oder *Uni-versum* zum Gegenstand haben wird.” English: “Thus the price, needed to acquire for it its outer being is as follows: to that which it has been subjugated or subject inwardly, it is also to be subjugated outwardly and, having become actual, it is to surrender itself as matter. We could also designate this moment as a moment of becoming of matter or of grounding, and it is not to be doubted which science will move in this domain of purely quantitative determinations and have as its object the One which has extricated itself into matter or the *Uni-versum*.”

the negative blind existent that originally *has Being*³⁵⁷ – in the sense that it is the first thing that arises in the potency scheme operative in judgment-making, of which we can say what it *is* and that it is not thought, but rather being.³⁵⁸ +A is also inverted: in the second “movement” in the operation of predication, the active determining force is no longer the world, but rather the transcendental structures. When Schelling writes that in the *Universio*, the object +A becomes the subject, this means that the function of the active de-terminator +A goes from the world to the subject. “Subject” here should be taken in the sense in which it is commonly used in transcendental philosophy: as the thinking subject, actively inflicting conceptual determination upon the transcendental object = X.³⁵⁹ The mapping of the potencies following the *Universio* is then thus:

B: the negative, purely material, passive and objective determination vs +A: the transcendental machinery of determination, therefore the activity of the transcendental subject, and hence a form of positive determination.

However, it might seem questionable and disingenuous to call the determination inflicted by +A “positive”, as I did here and above. To shed light on the question of determination in the *Potenzenlehre* would be a difficult task, but I would like to examine the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* also in regard to this topic, in order to provide a provisional solution to this problem, arguing that Schelling views determination in the *Potenzenlehre* in a rather unusual way, unusually enough for it to not be viewed through the maxim “*determinatio est negatio*”. I will also discuss the problem of individuation through the prism of positive and negative determination in chapter VII. In anticipation of that discussion, I turn to the -A/B as presented in the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*. B is, as I have already shown above, the potency effecting negative potentiation, i.e. determining which potencies the resulting product ±A is not to have. In calling this form of determination “negative potentiation”, I have somewhat stepped away from what is understood by *determinatio est negatio*. To avoid engaging in a lengthy discussion of Spinoza and Hegel here, especially in light of the fact that the exact relationship between what those two philosophers mean by this maxim is far from completely settled,³⁶⁰ let us look at how Schelling has taken to understand it the few times that he discusses it. Spinoza’s maxim comes up a few times in Schelling’s earlier writings, for

357 SW X 309.

358 N.B.: that it is not thinking, but rather being, we could also say of +A as it appears in the first moment, but we could not say what it is.

359 For a discussion of how a judgement is determinate for Kant, see *Schelling’s Return to Kant*, p. 26-28.

360 See Stern, R. 'Determination is Negation': The Adventures of a Doctrine from Spinoza to Hegel to the British Idealists. 2016. *Hegel Bulletin*, 37, pp. 29-52 [cited henceforth as *Determination is Negation*] and Melamed, Y. “Omnis determinatio est negatio” – Determination, Negation and Self-Negation in Spinoza, Kant, and Hegel. In Stern, R. and Melamed, Y. Y. *Spinoza and German Idealism*. Cambridge University Press (2012), pp. 176-196.

instance in the *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*,³⁶¹ and is generally implicit whenever Schelling is discussing determination through the interaction of opposing forces, which restrict and partially negate each other's action. Negative determination is therefore a determination taking place through the interaction of opposing forces where one determines the other and vice versa. In the *Freiheitsschrift*, Schelling has a slightly different view on negative determination, relating it less to opposing forces and more to determination from outside a particular entity.³⁶² So, if we now look at -A/B's "negative potentiation" and see how it compares to the classical notion of negative determination, we see that it is indeed in some sense determination from outside the entity or a product, insofar as potency B is the extant field generated by the potency -A, but it is also not fully external, insofar as -A, +A and $\pm A$ are all joined together in $\pm A$ (as will be discussed in the last part of this chapter). The negative potentiation effected by B, however, does not fully fit the "opposing forces" picture of the classical understanding, as the negative potentiation does not arise merely from the interplay of opposing forces. Although it is partly due to the opposed interaction and mutual determination of -A and +A, it is also due to the limitations inherent in the matter involved in this or that particular triad of the potency process. Hence, it would seem that the Spinozist maxim understood as invoking the mutual limitation of entities or forces is not the best way to approach determination in the *Potenzenlehre*. But what of the "positive potentiation" effected by +A? And is there perhaps a better way to approach determination in Schelling's late philosophy? In the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*, we do see a discussion of determination, which is unfortunately very cryptic. I allow myself to quote part of that discussion:

Zwischen dem Punkt des äußersten Widerstands [von B gegen +A – DK] und dem der völligen Ueberwindung oder Umwendung des B liegt aber eine Unendlichkeit von Momenten, d.h. von Möglichkeiten, in der Mitte. Jedem dieser Momente wird nun aber ein bestimmtes zur Existenz Kommendes, also ein Existirendes, dieser Unendlichkeit von Momenten eine Reihe von Existirendem entsprechen. In jedem dieser Existirenden wird das Princip, welches behufs dieser Ueberwindung sich

361 SW III, 441: "Die eine der beiden Thätigkeiten wurde angenommen als ursprünglich aufs positiv Unendliche gehend. Aber im Unendlichen ist keine Richtung. Denn Richtung ist Determination, Determination aber = Negation." For English see Schelling, F. W. J. *System of Transcendental Idealism*. Tr. Peter Heath. Charlottesville: 1978, p. 83 [cited henceforth as *System of Transcendental Idealism*]. Schelling here discusses the determination stemming from mutual limitation of opposing forces.

362 SW VII, 384: "Daß etwa das intelligible Wesen aus purer lauterer Unbestimmtheit heraus ohne allen Grund sich selbst bestimmen sollte, führt auf das obige System der Gleichgültigkeit der Willkür zurück. Um sich selbst bestimmen zu können, müßte es in sich schon bestimmt seyn, nicht von außen freilich, welches seiner Natur widerspricht, auch nicht von innen durch irgend eine bloß zufällige oder empirische Nothwendigkeit, indem dieß alles (das Psychologische so gut wie das Physische) unter ihm liegt; sondern es selber als sein Wesen, d.h. seine eigne Natur, müßte ihm Bestimmung seyn. Es ist ja kein unbestimmtes Allgemeines, sondern bestimmt das intelligible Wesen dieses Menschen; von einer solchen Bestimmtheit gilt der Spruch: Determinatio est negatio, keineswegs, indem sie mit der Position und dem Begriff des Wesens selber eins, also eigentlich das Wesen in dem Wesen ist." See *PI*, 49-50 for English.

zur Materie, d.h. völlig selbstlos; zum reinen Objekt gemacht hat, und welches nun eben Gegenstand der Ueberwindung und Umwendung geworden ist, dieses B wird in jedem der Existirenden wieder bis zu einem gewissen Punkte in sich selbst, in seine Potenz zurückgebracht, also auf eine gewisse Weise sich selbst Besitzendes, Selbständiges – dem seyn- und nicht seyn-Könnenden Genähertes seyn; denn was ihm in seiner Selbstaufgegebenheit fehlt, war eben das nicht Seyn, es war bloßes Seyn, es war nichts, wodurch dieses Seyn sich selbst faßte, kein Seyn, das in eigener Gewalt war. [...] Was an dieser Ableitung auffallen könnte, ist eben dieß, daß das nicht Seyn dasjenige sey, wodurch erst Selbständigkeit, für-sich-Seyn gesetzt werde. Man kann hier nicht mit dem von Spinoza herkommenden, in neuerer Zeit oft wiederholten, aber auch bloß formell zu verstehenden Satz: *determinatio est negatio* auskommen.³⁶³

This passage begins in a rather familiar manner – the potency complex $-A/B$ can exert more or less resistance against $+A$, and there is an infinity of possibilities as to how that mutual determination can end – each has a result. Following that however, it seems like the passage takes an unexpected turn: Schelling claims that the potency B is in a certain way independent, self-determining. How is this to be read? It seems that due to the fact that the potencies can be considered separately only as an abstraction and, consequently, that the activities of $-A$ and $+A$ cannot be fully disentangled from each other, they both jointly effect determination that is positive and negative, with negativity being predominantly on the side of $-A/B$ and positivity on the side of $+A$. Schelling points to the positivity of $+A$'s determination later in the text, writing: “eine innere qualitative Bestimmung, wie sie durch die von uns vorausgesetzte Zurückführung des außer-sich-Seyenden in sich selbst, die übrigens nur durch eine selbst außer der Materie zu denkende Ursache (die höhere Potenz) möglich ist”.³⁶⁴ The inner qualitative determination Schelling speaks about here is positive, and the reason why $+A$ (the “higher potency” Schelling mentions here) is positive is because it exerts determination from outside matter. This determination is nevertheless inner precisely because of that: it gives

363 SW X, 347-348. English: “However, between the point of outermost resistance [of B against $+A$ – DK] and the complete overcoming or inversion of B there lies in the middle an infinity of moments, i.e. of possibilities. A definite coming-to-existence, i.e. an existent, corresponds to each of these moments, and to the infinity of moments – a series of existents. In each of those existents, the principle with the goal of this overcoming makes itself into matter, i.e., fully selfless and into pure object, and now becomes precisely object of overcoming and inversion. This B becomes in each of the existents again a certain point in itself, brought back into its potency, thus in a certain way self-possessing and independent – it is what approximates what can be and what cannot be; for what it lacks in its self-renunciation was precisely the not-being, it was mere being, it was nothing whereby this being grasped itself, no being that was in its own power. [...] What could stand out in this derivation is precisely that the non-being be that through which independence and being-for-oneself is posited. We could not not here agree with the proposition, originating with Spinoza and often repeated in recent time, which is only to be understood formally: *determination est negatio*.”

It is interesting to note here, as an aside, that Schelling characterises Spinoza's *determinatio est negatio* maxim as merely formal [bloß formell]. This is part of his problem with this maxim.

364 SW X, 353. English: “an inner qualitative determination, as is possible through through the reduction which we posited of what is outside itself into itself, which is only possible through a cause thinking itself outside of matter (the higher potency)”.

something determination independently from relations to other things. The material determination effected by B tends to the negative, while the positive side of determination is effected by +A, which is “outside” matter. To sum up, bringing this back to the two aforementioned points concerning negative determination: even though -A/B and +A do operate in a certain way like the opposed powers of Schelling’s earlier *Naturphilosophie*, they are not straightforwardly negating powers and they do not interact with each other through simple limitation of each other’s actions. Indeed, even the powers of Schelling’s earlier *Naturphilosophie* did not really straightforwardly limit each other, but rather they were determined through their relation with a third. If the *Erster Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie* is taken as an example, the accelerating force and the retarding force only figure in the determination of material bodies through a third, gravity, and they enact determination together.³⁶⁵ Furthermore, their interaction is an inner mechanism of determination – at least if the quote directly given above is to be trusted, in case of +A. They all exert determination onto $\pm A$ from within it. It can thus be concluded that determination in the *Potenzenlehre* is more complex than the “negative” kind extracted from Spinoza’s letters, and it is also not fully “positive” in some arbitrary self-determining sense. Unfortunately, this topic deserves a separate study, and not much will be said about it here, save in chapter VII.

Be as it may with determination in Schelling, the only certain thing is that the potencies -A and +A are reciprocally determining of one another through the *Universio*. Predictably, the precise mechanism of this activity is a topic Schelling does not approach, but he, for all intents and purposes, never argues against the disjunctive machinery of thoroughgoing determination presented in Kant’s first *Critique*. From the early days of his career, when he wrote, in his letter to Hegel, that Kant has provided philosophy with the conclusions, but the premises were still missing,³⁶⁶ up until as late as the *Philosophie der Offenbarung* lectures where Schelling claims that Kant has successfully completed a negative philosophy, i.e. a thoroughgoing critique of reason’s functions, Schelling thinks that in describing the workings of our faculties, Kant was essentially right. Disagreements on the status of space and time notwithstanding,³⁶⁷ Schelling has not criticised the workings of the transcendental mechanism of the understanding and large parts of the Kantian account of reason; missing was the grounding of these transcendental mechanisms, i.e., setting them as parts of a process that would demonstrate how they originated and how they proceed. This is the gap Schelling is filling

365 I am indebted on this point to Jesper Lundsryd Rasmussen. To see how this plays out in the *Erster Entwurf*, see SW III, 262-265. There, Schelling discusses Kant’s identification of gravity with the attractive force, while also arguing, that all three forces are needed for the determination of space and material things.

366 Schelling, F. W. J., Fuhrmanns, H. (Ed.): *Schelling: Briefe und Dokumente*, Bd II (1775 – 1803), Zusatzband. Bonn: 1973, p. 57.

367 This will be dealt with in chapter VI.

with the *Potenzenlehre* by establishing that determination happens through mutual extantment of the subject and the world. To recapitulate the operation: the transcendental object = X (-A) is determined by the world (+A). In this operation -A loses the potency to be anything whatsoever because this potency becomes limited by +A. Thus -A is transformed into B, which formerly was the underlying subject and now that certain possibilities have been excluded from it, it extains itself in the series of existents (“in eine Reihe von Seyenden – ein System von unendlichen Existenzen – sich aufschließ[t]”³⁶⁸) and dissipates into a potential infinity of subjects: “[es löst es sich auf in eine] Unendlichkeit verschiedener Subjekte, die nämlich alle ein verschiedenes Verhältniß zu der höheren Potenz haben, ihr mehr oder weniger zugänglich sind.”³⁶⁹ This is how a plenitude of subjects to be determined is first produced – through the fragmentation of the initial plenum B.³⁷⁰ Each of these subjects is also in a position to form a different relationship with the determining potency +A and “submit” to it differently, as evidenced by the following passage:

Nehmen wir an, das Seyn, das ursprünglich nur bei B ist (B hat es für sich genommen), das Seyn werde auf solche Weise zwischen diesem (dem B) und der höheren Potenz, getheilt, daß in einer abwärtsgehenden Stufenfolge an dem einen Enge diejenigen Subjekte stehen, die, am wenigsten dem Raum und der Materie unterworfen, noch mit dem Feuer des reinen und am wenigsten gebrochneenen B leuchten, am andern Ende aber diejenigen, welche sich am meisten materialisirt, in denen B ganz zur Ueberwindung hingegeben, also auch der Grund oder das Substrat zur völligen Hinausführung des Processes gegeben sey, der sich jene vielmehr, in sich selbst beharrend, versagen.³⁷¹

+A, too, loses its only potency (the potency not to be) because from the perspective of the product $\pm A$, +A ceases to be pure being, but actualizes and becomes a fulfilled potency within $\pm A$, hence Schelling’s statement that the antecedent is a potency, whose actuality is in its consequent: “nämlich das Vorausgehende im Folgenden seine Wirklichkeit hat, gegen die es

368 SW X 312 – B is “eine im verbalen Sinn Existirende, welches das ausschließlich Seyende war, würde aufhören das Seyende zu seyn, und in eine Reihe von Seyenden – ein System von unendlichen Existenzen – sich ausschließen” [an existent in the verabl sense, which was exclusively that-which-has-being, would cease to be that which has being and extain itself in a series of that which has being – a system of infinite existents.], which probably means that B is a fragmented unity, which has previously contained all possibility. “Now” however, i. e. post-determination, actuality is bestowed upon it (we see this in SW X 313: “die höhere Macht überläßt dem B das Seyn, sie selbst bleibt noch abgeschieden vom Seyn, außer demselben, um sich erst in der Folge einen Theil an demselben zu geben”; English: “the higher power allocates being to B; it itself remains still divorced from being, outside it, in order to give itself a part of that very same in the consequence”), and it comes to extain other potencies.

369 SW X 313. English: it dissolves itself in an “infinity of different subjects, which namely all have a different relation to the higher potency, and are more or less accessible to it”.

370 N.B.: the fragmented subjects still recall the unity (see SW X 323) and eschatologically strive to achieve it.

371 SW X 330. English: “Let us assume that being, which originally is only at B (B has taken it for itself), that being would be divided between this (B) and the higher potency in such a manner, that in a reverse series of stages at one end there would stand these subjects which are least subordinate to space and matter, still illuminated by the fire of the pure, least broken B, and at other end – those which are most materialised, in which B is completely submitted to overpowering, and so too the ground or the substrate would be given to the full out-execution of the process which rather abandons it, persisting in itself.”

demnach bloße Potenz ist.”³⁷² Moreover, the transcendental subject (now functioning as +A) ultimately determines the withdrawing negation (B), and they both co-determine the object under determination for respectively what it is and what it is not. All this takes place in the foreground of the only – and very minimal – teleology Schelling speaks of: the *Weltgesetz* – that all possibilities be fulfilled and none suppressed: “[D]aß alle Möglichkeit sich erfülle, keine unterdrückt werde.”³⁷³ In accordance with the Kantian principle of thoroughgoing determination discussed previously, an object of determination is evaluated with respect to every predicate we have as regards to whether this predicate is ascribable to it or not. Any more detailed and less functionalist mechanisms on how the act of determination is performed are not given by Schelling. Despite this lack of detail, if there is anything Schelling’s potency scheme ultimately succeeds to demonstrate, it is the interdependence between mind and world. The subject-object inversion that has been the subject of this last section however ultimately comes to an end – in order to begin another cycle, the potencies need to reset back to the status

372 This is taken from Aristotle’s *De Anima II*, 3 414b29-30 : “ἀεὶ γὰρ ἐν τῷ ἐφεξῆς ὑπάρχει δυνάμει τὸ πρότερον ἐπὶ τῶν σχημάτων καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἐμπύχων”, and from Lecture 16 of Schelling’s *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie*: (SW XI pp.375-376): “Die Principen, die in der Idee – in dem Seyenden – als bloß mögliche oder Potenzen sind, waren im reinen Denken die Hypothesen oder Voraussetzungen des an sich Wirklichen, jedes aber die unmittelbare Hypothese des ihm Folgenden, - A die Hypothese von +A, beide zusammen die Hypothese von ±A: alle zuletzt von dem, was allein eigentlich Princip ist, dem rein Wirklichen, in dem nichts mehr von Möglichkeit. Dieses Verhältnis der Potenzen bringt mit sich, daß hier das Umgekehrte der sonst gewohnten Ordnung gilt, daß nämlich das Vorausgehende im Folgenden seine Wirklichkeit hat, gegen die es demnach bloße Potenz ist.” English: “The principles which in the idea – in that which has being – are as merely possible or potencies, were in pure thinking the hypotheses or premises of the actual in itself, each, however, the immediate hypothesis of its consequent: - A the hypothesis of +A, both together the hypothesis of ±A, all of them ultimately of that which alone is the proper principle, of the purely actual, in which there is no more possibility. This relation of potencies brings along with itself the fact that here the reverse of the otherwise usual order is the case, that namely the antecedent has its actuality in the consequent, to which it is mere potency.”

373 SW XI, 492: “Die Wissenschaft, in der wir uns bewegen, kennt kein anderes Gesetz, als daß alle Möglichkeit sich erfülle, keine unterdrückt werde; das einzige Gelübde, das sie ablegt, ist, daß was die Ordnung der Wesen betrifft, alles vernunftmäßig zugehe; die Vernunft aber ist interesselos, gegen alles gleichgesinnt (*omnibus aequa*), sie will daher, daß nichts gewaltsam, nichts durch Unterdrückung geschehe. Der Widerstreit zwischen dem ersten, keineswegs schon an sich materiellen Princip, und dem höheren, dem es sich als Materie hingeben soll, ist nicht dadurch zu bereden, daß das eine schlechthin unterliegt, das andere unbedingt siegt, sondern nur durch einen Vergleich, wobei jedem sein Recht widerfährt. Diese Gerechtigkeit, die sich die Wissenschaft zum Gesetz macht, ist zugleich das höchste Weltgesetz.” English: “The science in which we move knows no other law but that each possibility fulfil itself and none be suppressed: the only vow it takes is that when it comes to the order of beings, everything go in accordance with reason. But reason is devoid of interest, indifferent to everything, it wills hence that nothing happen violently, through suppression. The conflict between the first principle, in no way already material in-itself, and the higher, to which it must give away as matter, is not to be addressed through that the one purely perishes and the other is unconditionally victorious, but only through a comparison, whereby to each befalls its right. This justice which makes science into law is simultaneously the highest law of the world.” – This *Weltgesetz* is in fact similar to entropy: at the eschatological end of the world, all possibilities are fulfilled and nothing more happens. This is a kind of teleology, because the universe has an end, but there is no determinate way to this end. This end also according to Schelling, will never be reached. More on this topic in chapter VI.

quo. Schelling says, of B's striving to revert back to -A;³⁷⁴ i.e. of the world's striving to be the determinant and the subject's – the determined:

Aber eben diese Erhöhung in Selbstheit wird dem seiner Natur nach selbstlosen unleidlich, und es wird darum, wenn es zum Proceß kommt, nicht frei seyn zu wirken oder nicht zu wirken, sondern wirken **müssen**, wirken, um sich in den reinen Actus wiederherzustellen, und da dieß nicht geschehen kann, ohne die entstehende, gegen die ursprüngliche Natur wirkend gewordene Potenz zu überwinden und in ihr ursprüngliches Nichts zurückzuführen, so wird dieses Princip als **zweite** Ursache mit Nothwendigkeit dahin wirken, das außer sich Gesetzte in sich selbst zurückzubringen, nicht anders als wie eine plötzlich erregte Begierde in uns durch einen höheren Willen wieder unwirksam gemacht, ins Nicht-seyn zurückgeführt werden kann.³⁷⁵

B, as mentioned previously, disintegrates into several subjects with different determinability, and +A reasserts its power to determine, given the “being” back from B. The relationship between +A and B in this dynamic is not that of entire subordination of one to the other, despite the fact that +A is the determining factor; it is rather a division between the two principles: “eine Theilung zwischen den beiden Principien, zwischen denen das Seyn streitig ist, stattfindet, daß sie in dieses Seyn gleichsam sich theilen”.³⁷⁶ This is the fundamental general division between A and B, between (crudely put, and admitted as such even by Schelling) passivity and activity.

Now that we have traced the interweavings of the potencies until $\pm A$, what remains to do is to take a closer look at how the triad resets (which is important for the further progression of the potency process – otherwise potentiation would have only one iteration and be incapable of

374 “Die letzte Absicht des Werdens, welches wir darstellen, ist, daß das seyend Gewordene, das ursprünglich Subjekt war, wieder zu - A, zum wahren Subjekt werde, denn als B ist es das falsche Subjekt, das Subjekt, das nicht Subjekt seyn kann; um zum wahren Subjekt wiedergebracht zu werden, muß es sich erst zum Objekt machen, sich als Nicht-Subjekt bekennen, als Objekt eben ist es potentia veri subjecti, und hat insofern überhaupt wieder die Bedeutung einer Potenz, nicht der bloßen Materie, sondern eines Seyenden, das Actus und doch als solches Potenz ist. Denn dieser Widerspruch liegt in dem Wesen dessen, was wir Materie nennen.” – SW X, 310. English: “The last aim of becoming which we present is this: that what exists as having become, which was originally subject, becomes again -A, the true subject, for as B it is the false subject, the subject that cannot be subject; to be returned again to the true subject it must first make itself into object, acknowledge itself as non-subject. As object it is precisely potentia veri subjecti and thus still has the meaning of a potency; not mere matter, but that which has being and thus as such actus and yet, as such, potency. For this contradiction lies in the essence of what we call matter.”

375 SW XI, 389-390. English: “But precisely this elevation into selfhood will be unbearable to that which is by its nature selfless and because of that, when it will come to the process, it will not be free to act or not act, but will be **compelled** to act, in order to posit itself again in the pure actus, and since this cannot happen without overcoming the emergent potency, acting against the original nature and without returning to its original nothing, thus principle will act as a **second** cause with necessity to return that which is posited beyond itself into itself, much like a suddenly aroused desire in us is made inactive through a higher will and returned into non-being.”

376 SW X, 311. English: “A division is located between both potencies, between which being is disputed, that they equally share themselves in this being.”

forming chains³⁷⁷), examine the endpoint of the potency chain $\pm A$ and examine how, although it is an endpoint, the chain does not end at it.

III. The Third Potency

Now that both $-A$ and $+A$ have stood under discussion, what remains is only their product $\pm A$. There is not much left to say about this product, as it is merely a provisional function, a temporary state in which something produced remains before it re-enters the natural process of ceaseless becoming. It seems that $\pm A$ is construed as this transient state largely in order to introduce into the chains of becoming the stops with which they seem to be phenomenally – but also causally – punctuated, the latter insofar as conceptual systems that treat the world as a collection of discrete objects can be consistent and lead to valid conclusions.³⁷⁸ When it comes to the functional ontology of the *Potenzenlehre*, the third potency $\pm A$ of one potency triad can serve as the matter or the determining factor to a next set of three (so, as $-A$ or as $+A$) in the next potentiated threesome coil of the natural process. The exact future of a certain $\pm A$ unit is thus completely determined by the context and contingent upon it. This makes it even more difficult, to the point of almost literal impossibility, to talk about $\pm A$ as separate from the other two potencies, even if we keep in mind all the caveats and insist on treating the potencies exclusively functionally – hence Schelling very rarely even discusses $\pm A$ separately. Nevertheless, in the following section, I will look at the rare instances that Schelling does treat $\pm A$ in his later work, as well as investigate the peculiar locality it possesses: the fact that, at any level of the *Potenzenlehre*, and despite one of Schelling's notations being limited to three exponential degrees, the degrees potencies can be said to operate upon are infinite, ungrounded (i.e., continuing without final point of beginning or end) in both directions of antecedence and consequence.

A. The Subject-Object of Being

$\pm A$, the third potency, is what has the highest claim to be what has being - “[d]en höchsten Anspruch, das Seyende zu seyn, hat.”³⁷⁹ It is the subject-object, combining the features of $-A$ and $+A$ to become that which can and cannot be “d[as] seyn und nicht seyn Könnende”.³⁸⁰ In discussing $\pm A$, it is easiest to come to the conclusion that just as $-A$ is the undetermined unlimited and $+A$ the limit introduced into this unlimited, then $\pm A$ is the discrete final product of the productive process, a rigid form filled with a fluid matter, so to speak. This is how, for Schelling, Plato thinks of the “third thing” resulting from the determination of the *apeiron* by

377 See SW XI, 410.

378 Chapter VII will address the issue of individuation in the *Potenzenlehre*.

379 SW XI, 313.

380 SW X, 306.

the *peras*, and this is indeed how the finite products constituting the universe are made for him; they are a combination of being and non-being:

Bisher also konnten wir unsere beiden ersten Ursachen in den Platonischen erkennen. Auch zum Dritten aber geht Platon fort. Dieses ist ihm jedoch nicht ein Princip oder eine Ursache, sondern das aus den beiden ersten Erzeugte ($\tau\acute{o}$ τουτῶν ἔκγονον), das schon eine gemischte und gewordene Natur ($\mu\kappa\tau\eta$ καὶ γεγεννημένη οὐσία) ist.³⁸¹

For Plato the third is not a principle or cause, but an object. To Schelling's mind, this above simplistic conclusion is imprecise at best: $\pm A$ is not a finite and discrete product of the potency dialectic; it should rather still be viewed functionally. Its function as what stands at the top consequent end of the natural process of production is in accordance with the way Schelling uses the conceptual pair antecedent-consequent. Hermann Schrödter also speaks out against such an interpretation of the third as an individual thing: the potencies are for him all principles.³⁸² The function of $\pm A$ as something at the top end of a local natural process of generation corresponds to the way in which Schelling analyses the conceptual pair antecedent-consequent. Recall that the antecedent is an antecedent just because it has a certain consequent, thus making the consequent define the antecedent and in that sense, i.e., at least definitionally, consequent upon it. To give a concrete example Schelling himself uses: a mother is a mother only in consequence of bearing a child, to whom she is nevertheless a cause. Similarly, the $\pm A$ could not exist without the interaction of $-A$ and $+A$ like the child could not exist without the mother; Schelling nevertheless insists that the principles $-A$ and $+A$ can and do unfold only through conflict, therefore what allows them to unfold is the "promise", or rather, the possibility of $\pm A$.³⁸³ This is why Högrefe, in explaining $\pm A$ as part of his predication theory, speaks about it as "a medium", i.e. that which gives the two potencies operative in its antecedence the possibility to interact with each other:

Was Schelling hier [*wenn er $\pm A$ postuliert - DK*] postuliert, macht nur Sinn, wenn wir das Dritte als jenes ontische Medium fassen, in dem Irgendetwas ein So-und-so sein *kann*, d.h. als die Möglichkeit, daß Irgendetwas und die prädikative Bestimmung zusammen stehen können.³⁸⁴

381 SW XI, 394. "Until now we were able recognize our first two causes in the Platonic ones. But Plato also proceeds to the third. This is, to him, however, not a principle or a cause, but that which is generated from the first two ($\tau\acute{o}$ τουτῶν ἔκγονον), which already is a mixed and becoming nature ($\mu\kappa\tau\eta$ καὶ γεγεννημένη οὐσία)."

382 Compare *Grundlagen der Lehre*, p.566.

383 We see in the Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen that A^3 is the ground of the relation between A and A^2 – SW VII 427: "Beide Einheiten oder Potenzen sind wieder Eins in der absoluten Einheit, diese also als gemeinschaftliche Position der ersten und der zweiten Potenz ist A^3 [...]". For English, see *Stuttgart Seminars*, p. 202.

384 *PG*, p. 73. English: "What Schelling postulates here [when postulating $\pm A$] only makes sense if we construe the third as that ontic medium, in which something *can* be thus-and-so, i.e., as the possibility that something and a predicative determination can stand together."

As mentioned earlier, $\pm A$ is not a medium in the sense in which air is a medium for the propagation of sound, but is rather a mediator between two powers, a third-power space given to them for functioning. The space given to the first two potencies by $\pm A$ is moreover precisely a *medium* (here taken to mean “space”) of probability because $\pm A$ is a provisional terminus of the *Potenzenlehre* operations, and as the provisional terminus, it is the point at which the *Potenzenlehre* triad finally exerts extainment not at the level of its own elements (-A, +A, $\pm A$), but rather at the level of other triads in the world. To make this clearer: in the singularly isolated process of natural becoming P1, the elements -A and +A extain each other and $\pm A$, exerting a force of mutual “border authority” definition upon each other. This extainment works positively (so, not as elimination – see footnote 354):

$\pm A$, es sey nur als *von beiden* (jedem für sich) ausgeschlossen, wobei ausschließen im positiven Sinn genommen wurde. Sich ausschließen im negativen Sinn könnten sie nur, wenn sie drei Seyende wären. Das sind sie aber nicht, und vielmehr vermitteln sie sich gegenseitig, Momente des Seyenden zu seyn. Das erste ist schon nur gesetzt in Hinaussicht auf das letzte, sie sind nicht bloße zusammen-sich-Vertragende, wie die vorkantische Metaphysik von dem allervollkommensten Wesen sagte, daß es alle *realitates compossibiles* in sich vereinige, vielmehr fordern sie sich gegenseitig und sind die wahren *consentes* (wirklich von *con-sum*, wie *praesens* von *prae-sum*), wie die Etrusker gewisse Götter nannten, von denen sie sagten, daß sie nur miteinander entstehen und miteinander untergehen können.³⁸⁵

When the chain of potency process is taken to have reached $\pm A$, it is for the first time that the natural process P1 ascends a level higher and the resultant $\pm A$ specific to P1 can exert its extainment upon the elements of other processes distinct from P1. $\pm A$ is finally the space where -A and +A can exert their powers: it is here that the potencies acquire a real effect. In a certain sense, the entire *Potenzenlehre* scheme – and this is what ties potencies to possibility – is a scheme of possibilities, where -A is the maximally possible indeterminacy, +A the maximally possible determinacy and $\pm A$ – at least taken purely, before the *Potenzenlehre* scheme is applied to any concrete events – is the pure possibility of the possibilities lying in between the two pure termini. Schelling himself hints at that in the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie*:

385 SW XI, 292-293. “ $\pm A$, it would be only as the extained *from both* (each for itself), where extainment is taken in the positive sense. They could only be extained in the negative sense if it were three existents. This they are not, and furthermore they mutually mediate each other in being moments of that which has being. The first is already only posited in regard to the last. They are not mere tolerating-each-other-together, like in what the pre-Kantian metaphysics said of the most perfect being, that it unites in itself all *realitates compossibiles*; furthermore they found each other mutually and are true *consentes* (from *con-sum*, just as *praesens* from *prae-sum*), like the Etruscans called certain gods, of whom they said that they can only arise and perish together.”

Die drei Ursachen sind die ersten, die *reinen* Möglichkeiten, von denen jene zwischen Anfang und Ende liegenden *concreten* Möglichkeiten sich ableiten.³⁸⁶

If until now and despite all the warnings that the potencies are only ever active as a triad, the reader has had the impression that -A and +A have actually acted on their potentials, that impression must once again be disavowed as false: the triad is only ever active as a triad, and it is only once $\pm A$ enters the picture as a provisional terminus that -A and +A are able to engage in their extaining activities. $\pm A$ cannot be without -A or +A, just as they cannot be without it: what exists is the entire triad or, put otherwise, $\pm A$ insofar as it implicitly *is* the entire triad³⁸⁷ and insofar as the dissolution of the triad into its three dialectical units is an abstraction that does not correspond to reality in-itself – the triad actually exists as a dynamic unity. Since the potency which completes this dynamic unity, letting all its factors perform their functions is $\pm A$, Schelling speaks of it as a self-determining substance:

Die erste bloß materiale Ursache ist eigentlich nicht Ursache, da sie als die bestimmungslose, darum der Bestimmung bedürftige Natur eigentlich nur leidend ist. Dieses der Bestimmung Unterliegende ist reine *Substanz*, und dieß der erste Begriff. Die zweite Bestimmung gebende, zu der Substanz als bestimmende Ursache (ratio determinans) sich verhaltende, *diese* ist *reine Ursache*, da sie auch nichts für sich will. Was kann nun noch über beiden gedacht werden, oder vielmehr was *muß* über beiden gedacht werden, um zu einem begrifflichen Abschluß zu gelangen? Offenbar was Substanz *und* Ursache, Bestimmbares *und* Bestimmendes zugleich, also *die sich selbst bestimmende Substanz* ist, als Unbestimmtes ein *Können* in sich schließend, aber über dessen Gefahr durch das *Seyn* erhoben, an das es ihr gebunden ist, erst das wahrhafte, nämlich das *frei* seyn Könnende ist, weil *Seyn* und nicht *Seyn* ihr gleich, da sie im *Seyn* (in das *Seyn* sich bewegend) nicht aufhört Können zu seyn, und im nicht *Seyn* seyend bleibt [...]³⁸⁸

386 SW XI, 391. English: “The three causes are the first, the *pure* possibilities, from which the *concrete* possibilities that lie between the beginning and the end derive themselves”.

387 The potencies A and A² are only subordinate forms of A³: “nur die gemeinschaftlich untergeordneten Formen des A³ [...]“ – SW VII, 451. Schelling stays of this opinion also in the *Darstellung der Reirationalen Philosophie*: “Aber um eine Zusammenwirkung derselben und also ein Zusammengesetztes zu begreifen, mußten wir stillschweigend eine *Einheit* voraussetzen, durch welche die drei Ursachen zusammengehalten und zu gemeinschaftlicher Wirkung vereinigt werden.” - SW XI, 399. English: “But in order to grasp the mutual effect and the thus a mutual positing, we must silently presuppose a *unity* through which the three causes hold together and are united in common effect.”

388 SW XI, 394-395. “The first merely material cause is properly not a cause, for it, as the definitionless nature, hence in need of definition, is properly only passive. It, underlying determination, is pure *substance*, and this is the first concept. The second, which gives determination and relates to substance as a determining cause (ratio determinans), *this* is the *pure cause*, for it also does not will anything for itself. What can now also be thought over them both, or rather: what *must* be thought over them both in order to come to a conceptual completion? Obviously, substance and cause, simultaneously determinable and determining, *thus self-determining substance*, enclosing, as indeterminate, a Can in itself, but raised by *Being* above the risk thereof through being, to which it is tied. It is the *free Can-be*, because being and non-being are the same to it, for it in being (moving itself in being) does not cease to be Can, and in non-being remains being [...]”

It is fairly clear why Schelling here presents it as a substance: it is the only element of the triad that can be given that name, because it is the only one which can be said to have being.³⁸⁹ This obvious reification ceases to be puzzling at all, if it ever was, once it is remembered that it is only with and through $\pm A$ that potencies acquire an effect in the outside world and that Schelling subscribes to the Platonic definition of being, which is “simply power”.³⁹⁰ $\pm A$ is the site/node at which the powers of $-A$ and $+A$ act at all, therefore making it a site of, and placeholder for, being. It is significantly more puzzling to see that Schelling names it “self-determining”, as it would seem that it is determined by precisely that which is not it, i.e., $-A$ and $+A$. This would however underestimate the dependence of any of the elements of the triad on all others, and on the (albeit relative) completion of the triad in $\pm A$. In a certain entangled (or rather, non-dis-entangled) sense, $\pm A$ compacts the entire potency triad because it is the condition which provides to $+A$ and $-A$ the possibility to act, therefore determining itself through the other two potencies.³⁹¹ This peculiar property, according to which $\pm A$ can be spoken of as the entire potency triad that brought it into existence, brings us to our next point: the apparent layered fractality of the potencies, whereby what is an entire triad at one level

389 SW XI 313: “Den höchsten Anspruch, das Seyende zu seyn, hat, wie wir gesehen, das Dritte. Aber, da es das, was es ist, nicht für sich seyn kann, sondern nur in Gemeinschaft mit den andern, so gilt von ihm, daß es für sich eben auch nur das Seyende seyn *kann*, eine Potenz des Seyenden ist.“ Schelling then proceeds to explain why $\pm A$ is not a substance: “Aber das Ganze, das sich im Gedanken mit Nothwendigkeit erzeugte, dieses wird wohl das Seyende seyn? Ja, aber im bloßen Entwurf, nur in der Idee, nicht wirklich. Wie jedes einzelne Element das Seyende nur seyn kann, so ist das Ganze zwar das Seyende, aber das Seyende, das ebenfalls nicht Ist, sondern nur seyn kann. Es ist die Figur des Seyenden, nicht Es selbst, der Stoff der wirklichen Idee, nicht sie selbst, sie wirklich, wie Aristoteles von der Dynamis im Allgemeinen sagt: sie sey nur der Stoff des Allgemeinen. Zur Wirklichkeit wird es erst dann erhoben, wenn Eines oder Etwas Ist, das diese Möglichkeiten ist, die bis jetzt bloß in Gedanken reine Noemata sind.“ English: “The third has, as we have seen, the highest claim to be what has being. But since it cannot be what it is for-itself, but only in community with the other, it is the case regarding it that it for itself also merely *can* be what has being, i.e. is a potency of that which has being. [...] But as to the whole, which produces itself in thoughts with necessity, will this indeed be that which has being? Yes, but in mere outline, only in the idea, not actually. Just as every individual element of that which has being only can be, so the whole is that which has being, but one that likewise is not, but merely can be. It is the figure of that which has being, not It itself; the matter of actual idea, not the idea itself; actual, as Aristotle speaks of the Dynamis in general: it is merely the matter of the general. It is only then lifted to actuality when One or Something is that is these possibilities, which until now have been pure noemata in thought.”

390 *Sophist* 247e. Indeed, in the *Weltalter*-fragments (specifically WA I 42) Schelling defines existence as follows: “Sich selber wollen, sich seiner annehmen, sich zusammenfassen, sich in seiner Ganzheit setzen. Ist alles Eins, ist allen die thätige, die wahre Existenz”. English: “To will oneself, to assume one’s own for oneself, to recapitulate oneself, to posit oneself in one’s entirety. Everything is one, is the active, the true existence.”

391 SW XI, 396-7: “Hieraus erhellt, daß zum Begreifen eines Werdens ein Drittes erforderlich ist, nicht ein selbst Gewordenes, sondern das selbst *Ursache* ist. Denn in jedem der beiden andern ist ein für sich unendliches Wollen, das erste will nur im Seyn sich behaupten, das zweite nur es ins nicht Seyn zurückführen, das dritte allein, als das selbst, daß ich so sage, affectlose, kann bestimmen, in welchem Maß jeder Zeit, d. h. für jeden Moment des Processes, das Seyn überwunden seyn soll; es selbst aber, durch das jedes Werdende allein zum Stehen, also zu Stande kommt, ist das von innen heraus alles Zweckmäßige wirkende und zugleich selbst Zweck.” English: “From this it becomes clear that in order to grasp becoming a third element is necessary, not one that has become itself, but one that is itself *cause*. For in each of the two others there is for-itself infinite will; the first wants to assert itself only in Being and the second only to return the first to non-being. The third alone, as that itself, so to speak, affectless, can determine in what measure each time (i.e. for each moment of the process) being is to be overcome. It itself, however, through which each becoming alone comes to stand, thus to be, is what makes everything function goal-orientedly from the inside out and is itself a goal.”

becomes merely one element in a higher-standing triad at another. It is at the heart of this fractality, I would argue in what follows, that the key to Schelling's different notations of the *Potenzenlehre* lies.

B. Nestedness and Genesis

Although Schelling always treats the potencies as a threefold structure, it becomes evident at times that the potencies are treated as three in number merely because three is the minimal number of potencies needed for productivity. The potencies could be far more numerous than three. It is not that the number three is taken arbitrarily; Schelling has a very good reason for treating the potencies as clusters of three, this reason being that a unity is insufficient for the production of multiplicity, and a real duality inevitably produces a third.³⁹² Nevertheless, the number three is merely the minimal number: any talk of there being less than three elements in the dynamic structure of the world would not make sense, since under these circumstances the structure would cease to be a dynamic structure, but taking there to be more than three is more than possible; it corresponds to the real state of affairs, there being a multitude of processes in the world, hence Schelling's comments which at times imply that to any structure of a *Potenzenlehre* triad, there are potencies preceding and succeeding it. Such preceding and succession are because of the above-mentioned nature of $\pm A$: besides functioning as the highest-level potency in a process P1, it can – and inevitably will – function as a lower-level potency in another process P2, which in turn would produce another third, another functional instance of $\pm A$ which would then further perpetuate the cycle.³⁹³

392 The triad is not just necessary for productivity, but also for revelation. We need the being that reveals itself, that to which it is revealed, and a connection between the two. Schelling writes about this in his text *Ueber das Wesen des Gelehrten* from 1806: "Ein Wesen, das bloß *es selbst* wäre, als ein reines Eins (wenn nämlich ein solches, wie wir jetzt annehmen, gedacht werden könnte), wäre nothwendig ohne Offenbarung in ihm selbst; denn es hätte nichts, darin es sich offenbar würde, es könnte eben darum nicht *als Eins seyn*, denn das Seyn, das aktuelle wirkliche Seyn, ist eben die Selbstoffenbarung. Soll es als Eins *seyn*, so muß es sich offenbaren in ihm selbst; es offenbart sich aber nicht, wenn es bloß *es selbst*, wenn es nicht in ihm selbst ein Anderes, und *in* diesem Anderen sich selbst das Eine, also wenn es nicht überhaupt das lebendige Band von sich selbst und einem Anderen ist." English: "An essence which would be purely *it itself*, as a pure One (if such an essence could be thought at all, as we suppose now) would be necessarily without revelation in itself, for it has nothing in which it could reveal itself; it could for that same reason not be *as One*, for the being, the actual being, is precisely self-revelation. If it is to be as One, it must reveal itself in itself, but it doesn't reveal itself when it is merely itself, when it is not other in itself, and *in* this other itself One, i.e. when it is not the living bond of itself and other." See more on this in *Spekulation und Faktizität*, p. 44-45.

393 At one point in the *Darstellung der Reirationalen Philosophie* (SW XI, 391) Schelling introduces the potency level A^0 , in which the following potencies are grounded: "Das Seynkönnende überhaupt = A gesetzt, müßte das unmittelbar Seynkönnende durch A^1 bezeichnet werden, aber als solches erscheint es erst am Ende, im Proceß (denn mit dem Verhältniß der Ursachen ist auch ein Proceß in Aussicht gestellt) erscheint es gleich als entselbstetes, d. h. subjektloses Seyn, es wurde daher als B bezeichnet, das erst wieder in A zurückzubringen ist; das rein seyende, erst durch B in potentiam gesetzte, zum Subjekt erhöhte, wurde durch A^2 , das letzte, das als Objekt Subjekt und umgekehrt ist, wurde durch A^3 bezeichnet. Ich verlange von diesen Bezeichnungen nichts, als daß sie zur Deutlichkeit, mitunter zur Kürze dienen; aus demselben Grunde werde ich auch jetzt nicht verschmähen, das über aller Potenz Stehende, das dem Seyenden Ursache des Seyns und selbst reine

In order to discuss this potency cycle in greater detail, it would be useful to introduce here the concept of “ungroundedness”, emphasized by Iain Grant in his work.³⁹⁴ Ungroundedness means that the operations of the potencies have neither a starting point nor an end point.³⁹⁵ The non-existence of the end point is fairly straightforward – there is no single definite future for the potencies. There is no specific teleological direction in which natural process is heading; at best there is a law they obey, the aforementioned *Weltgesetz*, which drives all potencies to actualization and leaves none – not in the ultimate, possibly unattainable run – suppressed. There is no single ultimate outcome for the future of the potencies, since even the final state which, according to the *Weltgesetz*, will be reached once all potencies are actualized is merely an asymptotic horizon attainable only if all activity of the potencies ceased, not a defined future state.³⁹⁶ Natural production is moreover ungrounded in the direction of the past,

Wirklichkeit ist, wie früher, durch A^0 zu bezeichnen, wobei an das arithmetische $A^0 = 1$ nicht gedacht ist.”

English: “Given Can-Being posited generally = A, the immediately Can-being must be designated as A^1 , but as such it first appears at the end; it appears in process (for with this relation a process is promised to the causes) straight away as de-selved, i.e. subjectless being. Hence it it would be designated as B which first is to be brought back to A. That which purely has beng, first set through B in potentiam and elevated to subject, would be designated through A^2 . The last, which is as object is subject and vice-versa, would be designated as A^3 . I demand nothing of these designations except that they serve clarity and brevity, for the same reason I would deign to designate, as I did before, that which stands over all potency, the cause of being with respect to that-which-has-being and pure actuality, as A^0 , where the arithmetic $A^0 = 1$ is not meant.”

At another point (SW VII, 453) he introduces B^3 : “Der Grundaussdruck der Natur ist $A=B+$, oder daß in ihr das erst herrschende B – das erst herrschende Nichtseyende – seyend werde. Auf der tiefsten Stufe ist das Seyende ganz ins Körperliche verloren. Hier hat also das Nichtseyende die größte Gewalt, und also dieß, d. h. die erste Potenz der Natur, hätten wir ausdrücken können durch $A^1=B^3$. Wo B noch in der höchsten Potenz steht, da steht A nothwendig noch in der geringsten.” For English, see *Stuttgart Seminars*, p. 221 and for Buchheim’s insightful take on A^0 see *EvA*, p. 59.

394 Among other places, in the article “Mining Conditions”: “Thus the earth is not an object containing its ground within itself, like the preformationists’ animal series; but rather a series or process of grounding with respect to its consequents. If geology, or the “mining process”, opens onto an ungroundedness at the core of any object, this is precisely because there is no “primal layer of the world”, no “ultimate substrate” or substance on which everything ultimately rests.” – Iain Hamilton Grant, *Mining Conditions in The Speculative Turn*, eds. Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek and Graham Harman, Melbourne: re.press, 2011.

395 See also *Spekulation und Faktizität*, 93.

396 The cessation of the potencies’ activity is not a point of view Schelling would embrace. The universe is unfolding in order to recover an original (pre-universe and pre-historical, so not really one that has existed before in any sense in which anything exists after it) unity. However, since undoing or reversing processes is impossible and any actualization for the sake of recapturing the former unity “re”-captures nothing and instead participates in building another unity from the potencies available to the ruins of the former unity. Reality is fundamentally augmentative; it will not capture the unity it strives after, but will instead continue building a rough approximation of this unity by adding small increments to it. Iain Grant has breached this topic in, among other things, his essay “Everything”, focusing on the additive element which conceiving reality or “picturing” brings into reality: “That is, should “everything” be itself subject to epistemic claims or “takings as,” it becomes, by virtue of being so conceived, “less than” the everything amongst which it figures. Conversely, “takings as” are themselves inalienably features of the everything in which they occur. In consequence, if we take “everything” to determine a concept of reality and add that in reality, special inflation occurs, then the everything in which such inflation occurs is subject in turn to special inflation, yielding as its outcome that reality is either unequal to itself, or that special inflation does not occur in it. Since the latter is expressly denied by the theorem, the attempt to conceive reality as everything results in the assertion that reality is not equal to reality and so renders reality inconceivable. If as recommended reality is not taken as the concept of reality but as the environment against which special inflation is assessed, the recursive operation, described above, of special inflation on that environment does not render conceptual articulation insuperable, but shows reality to be generally inflationary, or importantly nonfinal with respect to form.”

because there is no ultimate starting point, no single identifiable fundamental unit of recapitulation for this process.³⁹⁷ If there were a certain basic kernel with which the development of the potencies began, a “unit” from which everything developed, then philosophy (or anything whatsoever) would be unable to trace the generation of this unit – both in the sense that it would not be able to investigate how this unit came about, but also in the sense that it would not be able to explain the powers this unit possesses and out of which, apparently, everything else arose. What follows from this entire logic of ungroundedness is that one can speak about potencies forming triads within which the relationship between a higher and a lower term stands while holding the possibility open that the higher potency relative to one process could be the lower one relative to another. One could also still speak about potencies operating in a sequence of first-second-third-etc., without the sequence reflecting first-ness and next-ness, or indeed any kind of hierarchy in any fixed sense.³⁹⁸ The potencies are thus ungrounded in a multitude of dimensions.

If we now use the concept of ungroundedness in order to look at the functional change $\pm A$ undergoes to become something lower, we can see that this change is inevitable. First, $\pm A$ is ungrounded in the direction of the consequent, and for it to be real at all, it must have an effect, i.e., participate in the production of something other than itself by becoming a lower stage with respect to it. Second, since the operations of the potencies are ungrounded with respect to their antecedents, it follows that any and every lower stage of a potency triad must have been a higher stage to another triad. This leads Schelling to a remarkable conclusion: what is being in one situation is non-being in another. What at one level has being in-itself is merely matter for something else at another, as Schelling puts very clearly in the *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*, but also in later texts:

Alles Nichtseyende ist nur relativ, nämlich in Bezug auf ein höheres Seyendes, aber es hat in sich selbst doch auch wieder ein Seyendes [...] Dies nun angewendet auf das, was wir das Seyn in Gott genannt haben: dieses ist in Bezug auf das Seyende in Gott allerdings ein Nichtseyendes, nämlich es verhält sich zu

397 See Iain Hamilton Grant developing what he calls an “ungrounded argument”, brilliantly, all over *Philosophies of Nature After Schelling* – on there being no single unit of recapitulation p.170: “[S]ynthesizing the constant decomposition of ‘nature as a whole’ charted in the *World Soul* with the ‘autonomous’ and ‘autarchic’, unconditioned productivity of the *First Outline* and the theory of *to auto* derived from Platonism, the *Universal Deduction of the Dynamic Process* (1800) finally renders the basal unit of recapitulation as the dynamic process itself [...]” Also, on why it is important to have a “physics of all” rather than search for fundamental building blocks of nature, see (for instance) *ibid*, pp. 32-35. Also his essay *Everything*: “If some candidate fundamentality is discovered, what makes it a candidate fundamental is that it serves as ground for its consequents and, if fundamental as such, then for all consequents. Any such candidate fundamental, once identified, is subject to the same problem Goethe’s discovery of the primal plant demonstrates. That is, that some X satisfying fundamentality can be identified from among all X’s renders its candidacy for fundamentality moot. Should any candidate fundamentality satisfier, or principle of sufficient reason arise, it is question begging, since rather than answering the demand for a reason for what is and how it is, it causes the question to be reposed. This is not least because there are no nondisputable fundamentality candidates.”

398 This is another way the potencies are ungrounded – in “depth”.

ihm ursprünglich bloß als Unterlage, als das, was nicht selber Ist, was bloß ist, um dem wahren Seyenden als Basis zu dienen. Aber doch ist es wieder ein Seyendes in sich selbst.³⁹⁹

This levelling is ubiquitous, and it is the reason Schelling uses the notations he uses in order to discuss the potencies. To continue with the themes of ungrounding, he suggests that the potencies can, in the chain of generation, be ungrounded down, by investigating the deeper levels of the potency B, and uncovering further coils of potentiation down below it. Such an ungroundedness is evidenced by Schelling's mentioning of further levels, levels that are even higher or even lower than the ones he normally addresses, as in the following quote:

Wenn ich die Formel [der Potenzenlehre] hätte verwickelter machen wollen, so hätte ich ebenso gut auch B nach den verschiedenen Graden, in welchen es A gleich (=), also Seyendes wird, durch Potenzen bezeichnen können. – Auf folgende Art.

Der Grundausdruck der Natur ist $A=B+$, oder daß in ihr das erst herrschende B – das erst herrschende Nichtseyende – seyend werde. Auf der tiefsten Stufe ist das Seyende ganz ins Körperliche verloren. Hier hat also das Nichtseyende die größte Gewalt, und also dieß, d.h. die erste Potenz der Natur, hätten wir ausdrücken können durch $A^1=B^3$. Wo B noch in der höchsten Potenz steht, da steht A nothwendig noch in der geringsten.⁴⁰⁰

The potencies can also be ungrounded in the direction of the consequents, and it is here that Schelling shows that he stops at A^3 simply because after it, the cycle will repeat itself:

Wir haben nun in Bisherigen bis zu dem Punkt geführt, wo das anfängliche B in ihr bis zu A^3 erhoben ist. Da aber dieses A^3 relativ, immer noch ein Objektives ist – nämlich in Beziehung auf das Ganze –, so verhält es sich doch, obgleich das absolute A, in Bezug auf die Natur wieder als ein B in Bezug auf ein noch höheres A. Dieses noch höhere A kann nicht mehr innerhalb der Natur liegen, denn alles ist in deser vollendet, wenn die dritte Potenz erreicht ist. Also lieft es über und außer der Natur. Wir könnten, wenn wir die Potenzen wollten fortlaufen lassen, es durch A^4 bezeichnen, weil wir schon ein A^3 in der Natur hatten, allein, wir würden dadurch doch nichts anderes ausdrücken, als daß es in Ansehung der ganzen Natur A^2 sey.⁴⁰¹

This ungroundedly levelled structure the Potenzenlehre explains why Schelling uses two notations for symbolizing the potencies: one with $-A$, $+A$, $\pm A$ and the other with exponents: A , A^2 , A^3 . Contrary to what is usually assumed in secondary literature where the two notations

399 SW VII, 437. English: "All non-being is merely relative, namely in relation to a higher being, but it has in itself still a being [...] This is only applicable to that which we can the being in God: it is certainly non-being in relation to God, namely it relates to him originally only as substratum, as that which itself *is not*, which merely is, in order to serve as basis to the true existent. But it is again an existent in itself."

See also *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung*, Ed. von Walter Erhardt, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1992, 35: "Wir sagten ja gleich anfangs: Das, was sein wird, ist nur in Bezug auf das später hervortretende Sein *Nichts*, aber nicht im Vergleich mit sich selbst *Nichts*. Schon das sein Könnende ist ja keineswegs *Nichts*; es ist nur das nicht actu Seiende; es ist das nicht außer sich, sondern das im höchsten Sinne in sich Seiende." English: "We said this immediately at the beginning: that which is to be is *nothing* only in relation to the later emerging being, but not in comparison with itself. Even the Can-being is not at all *nothing*, it is only not that-which-has-being actu, it is not a has-being outside of itself, but a has-being in-itself in the highest sense.

400 SW VII, 451. For English, see *Stuttgart Seminars*, p. 221.

401 SW VII, 455. For English, see *Stuttgart Seminars*, p. 222-223.

are used interchangeably,⁴⁰² they are not quite interchangeable, and Schelling's usage of two notations is not quite superfluous. The one expresses the relations within a certain potency cycle – this is the notation $-A$, $+A$, $\pm A$, and the plus and minus signs are used in order to symbolise the “directions” of the potencies, i.e. the undefined fluid negativity of $-A$ and the fixed determination of $+A$. The other notation captures the leveled and nested development of various processes with the help of exponents (A , A^2 , A^3). While Schelling does not spell out the difference between the two notations explicitly, he distinguishes between them, at least through his use of them. In the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*, for instance, there is a rare occasion of Schelling differentiating between the two: he writes that there are instances when the denomination A^2 cannot be applied to $+A$, although it in principle could. $+A$ can be called A^2 , *but not now*, says Schelling.⁴⁰³ “Not now” in the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* means

402 For instance, in *Prädikation und Genesis* Hogrebe uses the exponential notation from the *Weltalter*, because his book is restricted to dealing with the *Weltalter*. In *Eins von Allem* Buchheim uses only the $+/-$ notation, also likely because *Eins von Allem* restricts itself to the period, in which Schelling uses predominantly (but not exclusively) that notation. The majority of secondary literature uses only one notation or none at all (using the expressions “first potency”, “second potency” and “third potency”), without asking why there are two notations at all. The implicit consensus appears to be, apparently, that the two notations are interchangeable. The few usages of formal expression of potencies in *Mensch im Mythos* are all examples of $+/-$ notation (e.g. *MiM*, p. 125). *Philosophische Religion* is a text on the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* and uses the $+/-$ notation, and so does Schrödter's *Grundlagen der Lehre Schellings*. Literature on the *Weltalter* (see Gent, W.: “Die Kategorien des Raumes und der Zeit bei F. W. J. Schelling.” In *Zeitschrift für Philosophische Forschung* 8/3 (1954) pp.353-377, [zit. *Kategorien bei Schelling*], Holz's *Spekulation und Faktizität*, Schulz's *Vollendung des Deutschen Idealismus*, Loer's *Absolute und Wirklichkeit*, Sollberger's *Metaphysik und Invention* use next to know notations in discussing the potencies. The question of the difference between the two notations has, in fact, as far as I know, been posed only once, by Marcela Garcia in her dissertation *The Significance of Aristotle for Schelling's Late Philosophy*. In order to explain how Garcia explains the difference and why I do not share her view, it is needed to look at how she treats the difference between what Schelling calls “pure thought” and what he calls “rational science”, both discussed in more detail in chapter IV. Here it suffices to say that pure thought is usually conceived of as thought about the structure of thought, while “rational science” is a broad name for negative philosophy, tasked with discovering ontological principles. Garcia takes pure thought to be dealing with potencies as sheer abstractions, and rational science to be engaging with them at some level of actuality, because, she argues, Schelling took the notion of actuality from Aristotle, and has made it to mean something like “priority”, and principles – which the potencies are in rational science – do have priority. The two notations, Garcia then claims, are representative of that: the integer notation is reserved for potencies in “pure thought”, and the exponential one – for potencies within rational science. This interpretation hinges on the meaning of actuality Schelling takes from Aristotle, and I, being no Aristotle specialist, cannot argue with Garcia on this, especially here. However, while her take is very interesting, I cannot help but be sceptical, because in the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* which she examines, Schelling barely uses the exponential notation, and one would think that he would, as large parts of that text are dedicated to “rational science”. In any case, see *Significance of Aristotle* p. 214ff.

403 “...[E]s [das ausschließende Seyn – DK] (als Subjekt von allem) statt alles (instar omnium) war, andererseits ist es als das ausschließliche Seyende im Widerspruch mit der höheren Potenz, die wir, weil sie in der Indifferenz das Seyende war, mit $+A$ bezeichneten (inwiefern sie die Potenz der nächst höheren Ordnung ist, die *erst* aus dem Seyn gesetzte, welche also nicht unmittelbar das nicht Seyende und also noch weniger unmittelbar das Seynkönnende ist, wie die erste, werden wir sie in der Folge, aber nicht jetzt, auch mit A^2 bezeichnen können, wobei nämlich A das seyn Könnende bedeutet [...])” - SW X 309. English: “[I]t [the extaining Being] (as subject of all) was in place of everything (instar omnium); on the other hand, as exclusively has-being it is also in contradiction with the higher potency which, because it was that which has being in indifference, we designated $+A$ (insofar as it was the power of the next higher order that is *first* posited outside Being. It is therefore not immediately that-which-does-not-have-being and hence is even less immediately the Can-being, like the first, and we will in what follows, but not now, also be able to designate it A^2 [...]”.

“not when we are still dealing with the interactions within one coil, i.e., one triad of the *Potenzenlehre*”. Moreover, in comparing the way Schelling uses the two notations across the different texts (for instance, in *Stuttgart Privatvorlesungen* and the *Weltalter*, where the exponential notation is used vs. *Darstellung des Naturprozesses and Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* where the positive/negative “integer” notation is being used) we notice that the way the two different notations are used serves different purposes. The positive/negative notation is used when Schelling is looking into how the potencies operate in nature as a process of productive becoming at the “basic” or fundamental level – which is why it is the notation used to discuss the construction of space and electromagnetism in *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*.⁴⁰⁴ Granted, given Schelling’s ungrounded approach to fundamentality, the single triad set of fundamentals $-A, +A, \pm A$ is only fundamental insofar as it is cut off from the rest of the process of becoming, from its antecedents and consequents. Still, this first notation, whenever used, represents the basic level of potency functioning. The exponential notation, on the other hand, Schelling almost exclusively uses when there are several different levels at which becoming happens in the world; this is his project in the earlier texts (*Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen* and *Weltalter*), while in the later *Darstellungen*, he is searching for the principles of being and becoming. He thus uses the exponential notation to classify and construct a hierarchy of levels so that the gradual development of spirit or alternatively the gradual unfolding of God could be discussed as a sequence of stages. The *Potenzenlehre* hierarchy is nevertheless continuous: Schelling has no intention to posit a radical break between the different levels; the higher is never something outwardly transcendent, but it is rather precisely out of the lower that it emerges.⁴⁰⁵

The existence of two notations, then, is not a private idiosyncrasy in Schelling’s work, but a means to denote at least quasi-formally the fractality of the *Potenzenlehre*. The most likely deducible relationship between the two notations is this: each level of the A, A^2 and A^3 is itself formed of triads,⁴⁰⁶ and the two different notations are introduced to communicate this difference, namely that between the level provisionally taken as basic and the level which can be further decomposed and functionally analysed with respect to the different further levels of potencies that make it up. Numerous phenomena or processes can be taken as decomposable levels and analysed functionally in terms of gradual potency activity. This is why, at different

404 See e.g. SW X 350-365, SW VII 446-455 or the entire *Allgemeine Deduktion des Dynamischen Prozessen oder der Kategorien der Physik* in SW IV.

405 As my colleague Jesper Lundsryd Rasmussen wonderfully put it, there are multiple doctrines, or rather multiple levels of the same doctrine identifiable through notation, such that exponentials are used for cosmogony or cosmology, while the +/- or integral notation is used for ontology.

406 Sometimes it looks indeed as if the two notations were indeed interchangeable. See passage from SW XI, 391 in ft. 393 in this work.

points in Schelling's work, all of ether, light, finite spirit *sua natura*⁴⁰⁷ and what mediates spirit⁴⁰⁸ were named A²; they simply stood at a certain level of development with respect to the topic Schelling was there and then addressing. They fit the hierarchy scheme, occupying in various contexts the place of A². The potencies are ultimately a nested structure, and which potency occupies which spot in this structure is heavily context-dependent. I must remark here that this nestedness appears very early in Schelling's thought: already in the most important texts of the *Identitätsphilosophie* from 1801 to 1804 the layered nestedness of the potencies can be seen. It is perhaps at its clearest in the *Darstellung Meines Systems*, where each potency has three levels of potencies within itself. Let us take the example of matter as the first potency: this first potency is expressed, according to the Schellingian notation of 1801, as A=B, with "A" and "B" themselves potencies of this first potency.⁴⁰⁹ Furthermore, in this *Darstellung*, just as in other texts of this period – *Fernere Darstellungen, Philosophie der Kunst*, etc., the singular is presented as both the individual or the totality in-itself as well as a part of the absolute and hence not singular at all.⁴¹⁰ The *Potenzenlehre* has of course undergone a lot of transformations in the time from 1801 until the time of the texts considered in this work – but the fact that Schelling was already taking the potencies to have a fractal-like structure in 1801 is important. Schelling has at no point contradicted this view of the potencies, and it can be clearly seen, that it is not at all far-fetched to read the later potencies as fractalised, and that this manner of thinking is not strange to Schelling's philosophy.

C. Nestedness and Predication

As a result of the examination of the third potency $\pm A$, we have established that $\pm A$ has the function of an interim mediator between $-A$ and $+A$ that allows those two lower potencies to act. Moreover, we have discussed the ungroundedness of the potency, and the capability of the highest link in one loop of natural process become the lower stepping stone for another loop.

407 See SW VII, 449: "A² = Aether"; 450: "Bis jetzt behauptete die Schwerkraft noch ihre Substantialität im Gegensatz gegen das Licht (A²)." and 456-7: "Nur im Menschen wird endlich das absolute A², das lang gesuchte, lang ersehnte, emporgehoben aus dem B, das an sich oder sua natura Seyende aus dem Nichtseyenden. Das sua natura Seyende ist Geist, und das aus dem Nichtseyenden Erhobene, insofern also Gewordene, aber doch natura sua Seyende ist endlicher Geist." For English, see *Stuttgart Seminars*, p. 219 and pp. 223-224.

408 SW X, 382: "Wie das B das Ungeistige ist, A² das dem Ungeistigen Entgegengesetzte, es Negierende und dadurch den Geist Vermittelnde, so ist A³ der Geist selbst [...]" English: "Just as B is the unspiritual and A² that which is opposed to the unspiritual, which negates it and thus mediates spirit, A³ is spirit itself."

409 SW IV 153-4: "In dem Satz A=A ist die Identität selbst als Substanz, A und A aber als die bloßen Accidenzen (Formen des Seyns) dieser Substanz gesetzt. - Die Substanz ist daher (§. 6) unabhängig von den Accidenzen. Die Substanz in der Materie ist = (A = B), die Accidenzen sind A und B als Potenzen dieses Identischen (§. 64, Erklärung 1) gedacht. A = B ist daher ursprünglich und unabhängig von A sowohl als B, die letztern als Potenzen gedacht, denn es ist das primum existens (§. 51, Zusatz)." English: "In the proposition A=A identity itself is substance, while A and A are posited as sheer accidents (forms of being) of this substance. - Substance is hence (§. 6) independent of the accidents. The substance in matter is = (A = B), the accidents are A and B and thought as potencies of this identical unit (§. 64, Erklärung 1). A=B is thus originary and independent of A and of B, both of which are thought of potencies, for the former is primum existens (§. 51, Zusatz)."

410 See e.g. SW IV 133.

This has clear implications for predication. First, in the process of predication, the resulting statement has the form of “x is y”. The statement – or rather, its form – plays the role of the mediator between the two potencies that produce it. The logic of the consequent determining the antecedent as to what it is an antecedent of is operative here as well, and is possibly even stronger in this instance: the end form “x is y” that the resulting statement takes enables the act of predication to take place. There is a subject and an object that are to be joined with a copula in a certain way – this is the way our mind operates, and it is only in the foreground of the operations of our mind that things could be encoded as subjects and objects, i.e. as predicative potencies $-A$ and $+A$. The prospect and scheme of the resulting $\pm A$, along with the fact that a $\pm A$ will indeed be formed, effectively determine the process of its formation. Second, just as with anything else that fulfills the form of potency $\pm A$, a statement produced in one instance of predication can and does normally end up serving as matter or major determining factor for another statement of predication. Even taken intuitively, judgments function just like potencies – in chains, with the conclusion of one argument playing the role of the premise for another. Here we have to remind ourselves, however, of the evident fact that the *Potenzenlehre* operates on different levels not only in the simple sense of being a continuous grounding chain, but that it also potentiates. At the level of the productive chain that constantly re-produces instances of the same (albeit new ones), the roles $-A$ and $+A$ are also played by instances of the same; i.e., in case of making judgments, the transcendental object = X is the matter of predication in every case, and the dual potency of world/mind plays the role of $+A$, invariably. At this level, it is not that the judgment which here functions as $\pm A$ is turned into matter for something else in the same way in which the transcendental object = X is the matter for a statement at the level of transcendental structures. It is rather that the resulting predicative statement $\pm A$ becomes matter for the statements that follow it by constituting B, since there is an intimate link between $-A/B$ and $\pm A$.⁴¹¹ it would seem that whenever the subject of Schelling’s discussion is the way a certain element of the productive process becomes matter for the other, i.e., loses the function it has otherwise in order to produce something new, he refers to it as matter, and sometimes as B. If Schelling is discussing a provisional terminal point and individuality, he refers to the potency in question as $\pm A$ – and this is precisely because $\pm A$ can become the lowest potency in another situation, i.e., become simultaneously $-A$ and B. This, while admittedly somewhat confusing,

411 I have also previously said that it was the potency B which gives itself up for future determination. In this section $\pm A$ does the same thing. Does this mean that Schelling is inconsistently giving two different names to the same thing? I would venture to answer with a no, mostly because the potencies are functions and not things. As we have seen with $\pm A$, which is the medium to the activity of both $-A$ and $+A$, all three potencies are very tightly related. $\pm A$ is also very tightly related to B, and since it seems that Schelling considers that $\pm A$ can become the lowest potency in a new loop of the chain of natural process, he thinks it could become both $-A$ and B.

nevertheless illuminates some of the passages from the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* where a link more intimate than expected between B and $\pm A$ is discussed:

Das zweite, $\pm A$, ist also so weit ganz von dem Seyn ausgeschlossen, das rein Negirte, bloß das nicht Seyende, ohne das seyn Könnende zu seyn. Denn nachdem die Sphäre des Seyns ganz eingenommen von dem B, hat jenes keine *Möglichkeit* zu seyn, als inwiefern ihm B Antheil an dem Seyn verstattet, dieser Antheil an dem Seyn könnte ihm nur so weit zukommen, als ihm zugelassen wäre, B wieder in -A umzuwenden, B seinerseits wieder zu negiren; aber zunächst ist es von B ganz und absolut ausgeschlossen, das ihm gar keinen Zugang verstattet.⁴¹²

Schelling here claims that B assimilates the sphere of Being entirely; this can be read as saying that the entirety of $\pm A$ becomes B, which is then transformed back to -A to become the matter of yet another becoming process. Expressed simply: $\pm A$ feeds back into the process of predication by, as it were, being what it is: it determines what has already been said of the world and therefore rules out certain things which could not be said of the world anymore. At another level, the one at which the potencies undergo a qualitative change, i.e., potentiate themselves, $\pm A$ also feeds back into the potency chains of production, but it has one additional way to do so. At this level, the statements can become the objects of judgment for other statements: they become those bits of the world which act in determining factors in the first movement of predication. Both levels could well be happening at once: to return to our kitten example, the chain of producing kittens at some level reproduces more of roughly the same, and at another level, the domestic cat species could well serve as a lower stage for the production of another felid species, one that would evolve from it. To sum up – the $\pm A$, its form “x is y”, acts as mediator between the two potencies -A and +A, and once this instance of predication “x is y” is produced, then it becomes yet another object in the world, determining – either as what has simply already been said or as the next object of investigation, which this time ascends to a meta-level – further instances of predication. Markus Gabriel can help us shed light on the potency scheme as applied to predication in particular; he proposes a tripartite structure of the production of predicative statements, as opposed to Hogebe, who proposed a tripartite scheme of merely the statement itself. Gabriel’s tripartite structure is temporal, consisting of logical past, logical present and logical future, where the logical past are the truth conditions of a statement, pre-existing it, the logical present is being or the state

412 SW X, 309, “The second, $\pm A$, is thus so far fully extained from being, the purely negated, the merely non-existent, without being what can be. For after the sphere of being has been entirely capture by B, this being has no *possibility* to be except insofar as B returns to it a portion of being, and this portion of being could only be granted to it if it were allowed to it to return B into -A again and in turn negate B; but first it is fully and absolutely excluded from B, which gives it no access at all. See also the odd passage in the *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen* (SW VII 451): “Was das A³ ist? Antwort, es ist die innerste Substanz des B selber, das ja implicite alle Potenzen in sich enthält. Die *Potenzen* des A drücken nichts anderes aus als die successive Erhebung des Nichtseyenden = B in das Seyende oder das A. Also A³ in der Natur drückt nichts anderes aus als das Höchste aus dem Nichtseyenden emporgehobene Seyende - also das *Innerste* der Natur.” For English, see *Stuttgart Seminars*, p. 220.

of affairs, or determinacy, and the logical future is the statement itself.⁴¹³ While Gabriel's structure is drawn from the *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung*, it is not hard to see how something like it would apply in this case – what he calls “logical past” of the statement would be its “matter”, which in this case would be its truth-conditions mediated by the general structure of predication provided by the transcendental structures. The “logical present” would be how things are, the determinate state of affairs determining the statement, and the “logical future” would be the result of putting the statement together.

In the course of this chapter, we have discussed the operations of the *Potenzenlehre's* three potencies, largely as how they have been discussed in Schelling's late *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*, and framing them into the context of predication. In this context, the dual potency -A/B is the matter of predication, correlated with Kant's transcendental object=X. It is the initial formlessness, the “anything whatsoever”, which gets determined, and then, once one coil, one cycle of the potencies is completed, becomes the completely passive matter for the next cycle. +A is the force actively determining both the subject of predication and the transcendental object – it is also dual, since it is a role and a function which two different “actors” perform at different stages of the process: the world/thing in-itself and the activity of the transcendental subject. ±A is then the mediator between -A and +A that results in a finite and individual, albeit interim⁴¹⁴ thing and assumes the role of a lower potency at a higher level of potency production, and so ungroundedly on and on as long as the productive natural process continues. Throughout this chapter, I have tried to adhere strictly to using the potencies as functions and speaking about them in a functional register. This raises a concern: insofar as the potencies are treated as roles which different processes can fulfill, we now have to deal with the question of whether the *Potenzenlehre* is merely an abstract scheme and – more generally – what abstraction means in this line of thinking. The worry which rises at this point is that the *Potenzenlehre* cannot be an *ontoepistemology*, because the potencies are merely ideal projections, principles devoid of any metaphysical import. The next chapter will be devoted to answering this above question and staving off the above worry.

413 See on this *Aarhus III*, pp. 15-16 and 19-21, as well *Antwort auf der Grundfrage*. I am not going to comment on the temporality of this scheme as Gabriel himself sadly has not yet elaborated on that topic.

414 Which in Schelling's chains of becoming is nothing more and nothing less than a stopped sequence: “The particularity of the particular would accordingly be the partial arrest of a series.” – *Everything*, p. 161.

III

A Thousand Cuts

The reading of the *Potenzenlehre* presented in the previous chapter – namely that the potencies are not objects or kinds of object, but functions – raises the question of their ontological status. When roles, functions or placeholders are discussed, it can appear as if those roles were merely abstractions, i.e. methods to isolate various entities or activities from natural process, as well as to generalise and categorise them. There is thus, at least at a first glance, evidence for the view that the potencies for Schelling are merely abstractions – in the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* Schelling writes of the potencies, at least at the beginning of the exposition, that they are merely in the idea – “nur in der Idee” or “nur unbedingt in der Idee”.⁴¹⁵ In *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* he also writes, concerning $\pm A$, seemingly pointing out even its less-than-actual character:

Aber das Ganze, das sich im Gedanken mit Nothwendigkeit erzeugte, dieses wird wohl das Seyende seyn? Ja, aber im bloßen Entwurf, nur in der Idee, nicht wirklich. Wie jedes einzelne Element das Seyende nur *seyn kann*, so ist das Ganze zwar *das* Seyende, aber das Seyende, das ebenfalls nicht Ist, sondern nur seyn kann. Es ist die Figur des Seyenden, nicht Es selbst, der *Stoff* der wirklichen Idee, nicht sie selbst, sie wirklich, wie Aristoteles von der Dynamis im Allgemeinen sagt: sie sey nur der *Stoff* des Allgemeinen. Zur Wirklichkeit wird es erst dann erhoben, wenn Eines oder Etwas Ist, das diese Möglichkeiten ist, die bis jetzt bloß in Gedanken reine Noemata sind. Dieses aber, was diese Möglichkeiten Ist, kann begreiflicherweise nicht selbst wieder eine Möglichkeit seyn.⁴¹⁶

Once again the $\pm A$ is “in der Idee, nicht wirklich”. Furthermore, the *Potenzenlehre* is a schema – is it not, just like other schemata and mathematical models, to be applied only cautiously to reality, a mere abstraction? Should the *Potenzenlehre* be considered as merely instrumental – or worse, as an example of negative philosophy, the object of Schelling’s critique, that which destroys nature and drives our thought into the space of empty concepts? We must resolve these questions and clarify the ontological status of the potencies if we want to argue that we can use the potencies to understand both natural process and predication as a generation and

415 SW X, 305-306.

416 SW XI, 313. English: “But as to the whole, which produces itself in thoughts with necessity, will this indeed be that which has being? Yes, but in mere outline, only in the idea, not actually. Just as every individual element of that which has being only can be, so the whole is that which has being, but one that likewise is not, but merely can be. It is the figure of that which has being, not It itself; the matter of actual idea, not the idea itself; actual, as Aristotle speaks of the Dynamis in general: it is merely the matter of the general. It is only then lifted to actuality when One or Something is that is these possibilities, which until now have been pure noemata in thought.”

actualisation, similar to this natural process and corresponding to the world. This chapter will seek to accomplish this task.

I Nature Morte

It would seem that nature is destructible in a multitude of ways. Only one of these ways, however, is a destruction of *nature*, as opposed to that of natural products. The systematic undermining of our precarious environmental balance, loss of animal and plant species, genetic modification, robotics – all those at their best (or maybe worst) only destroy a part of nature. Nothing short of the comically depraved plans of cinema villains who seek and have means to literally destroy everything that exists, to return *All* – not just every single thing, but the *All*, including the very processes of production/annihilation and the forces behind them – into the void could possibly be said to annihilate nature. Even then, probably not quite. This position is consequent on Schelling's view of nature as unconditioned presented above. This nature cannot be annihilated – i.e. its functioning cannot be stopped – simply with and through the actions of human animals forming a part of it. Only a total stoppage of this activity could be nature's undoing. Speaking very generally, nature for Schelling is not an endlessly extended set of things, as it was for Kant, but a productive force, operating in potencies. Already, in the *Erster Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie*, Schelling writes that philosophy asks for an unconditioned in nature, and that nature is in no way to be understood as an object: an objectifying idea of nature would make it into a thing (e.g. into an "Inbegriff *alles Seyns*"⁴¹⁷). Instead, philosophy has to conceive of nature only as active, as pure productivity – "denn philosophiren läßt sich über keinen Gegenstand, der nicht in Thätigkeit zu versetzen ist".⁴¹⁸ Were nature completely inactive, a *Naturphilosophie* would have been impossible.⁴¹⁹ Schelling stands by this conviction overall in his writing, so that even in his very late *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* nature is defined as the activity of the three moments of being – the potencies:

Im Anfang dieser ganzen Entwicklung, liessen wir die Idee auseinander treten in ihre Momente, damit die Wiederkehr in die Einheit sich verwirkliche. Das Auseinandergehen und successiv Wiedereinswerden dieser Momente ist die Natur. Die Wiederherstellung der Einheit ist ihre Ende und Zweck der Natur.⁴²⁰

417 SW III, 13 – If nature were presented as a mere sum (Inbegriff) of what appears to us, it would be "daher unmöglich, die Natur als ein Unbedingtes anzusehen" – thus impossible to conceive of it as an unconditioned.

418 Ibid. For English, *First Outline*, 14: "We know Nature only as active—for it is impossible to philosophize about any subject which cannot be engaged in activity."

419 Compare Blamauer, M.: *Subjektivität und ihr Platz in der Natur. Untersuchung zu Schellings Versuch einer naturphilosophischen Grundlegung des Bewusstseins*, Stuttgart: 2006, pp. 112-117, [cited as *Subjektivität und ihr Platz*].

420 SW X, 389. English: "At the beginning of this entire development, we let the idea break apart into its moments so that the return to the unity actualises. The separation and successive re-unification of these moments is nature. The restoration of the unity is its end and the goal of nature."

Such a nature cannot be annihilated, i.e. forced to terminate its function, exclusively through the activities of human creatures, which are ultimately parts of this nature. Only the complete halting of activity could be the undoing of this nature. In his work, Schelling also gives us hints as to the potential perpetrator of the undoing: abstraction. Schelling's famous *Freiheitsschrift* diagnosis "Die ganze neu-europäische Philosophie seit ihrem Beginn (durch Descartes) hat diesen gemeinschaftlichen Mangel, daß die Natur für sie nicht vorhanden ist, und daß es ihr am lebendigen Grunde fehlt"⁴²¹ blames modern European philosophy for a very specific error – an attempt to think nature out of relevance, even out of existence through abstraction, insisting:

Der Idealismus, wenn er nicht einen lebendigen Realismus zur Basis erhält, wird ein ebenso leeres und abgezogenes System, als das Leibnizische, Spinozische, oder irgend ein anderes dogmatisches. [...] Idealismus ist Seele der Philosophie; Realismus ihr Leib; nur beide zusammen machen ein lebendiges Ganzes aus. Nie kann der letzte das Princip hergeben, aber er muß Grund und Mittel seyn, worin jener sich verwirklicht, Fleisch und Blut annimmt. Fehlt einer Philosophie dieses lebendige Fundament, welches gewöhnlich ein Zeichen ist, daß auch das ideelle Princip in ihr ursprünglich nur schwach wirksam war: so verliert sie sich in jene Systeme, deren abgezogene Begriffe von Aseität, Modificationen u.s.w. mit der Lebenskraft und Fülle der Wirklichkeit in dem schneidendsten Contrast stehen. Wo aber das ideelle Princip wirklich in hohem Maße kräftig wirkt, aber die versöhnende und vermittelnde Basis nicht finden kann, da erzeugt es einen trüben und wilden Enthusiasmus, der in Selbstzerfleischung, oder, wie bei den Priestern der phrygischen Göttin, in Selbstentmannung ausbricht, welche in der Philosophie durch das Aufgeben von Vernunft und Wissenschaft vollbracht wird.⁴²²

This real principle Schelling addresses in the above quote, one which is to serve as the vital ground of philosophy, is nature. The abstraction here is separating nature from philosophy, from thinking, from what is mistakenly taken to be distinctly and exclusively human. Schelling, after all, defines abstraction in the *System des Transzendentalen Idealismus* as follows: "Jenes Absondern des Handelns vom Produzierten heißt im gewöhnlichen

421 SW VII, 356 or, for English *PI*, p. 26. Abstraction in particular is here the culprit and the murder weapon here – the diagnosis passage from the *Freiheitsschrift* accuses realisms and idealisms that operate according to the assumption that the real and the ideal principles are separate, of precisely being too lifelessly abstract as long as the real (i.e., Nature) is not taken as the foundation of the ideal.

422 Ibid. For English see *PI*, p. 26: "Idealism, if it does not have as its basis a living realism, becomes just as empty and abstract a system as that of Leibniz, Spinoza, or any other dogmatist. [...] Idealism is the soul of philosophy; realism is the body; only both together can constitute a living whole. The latter can never provide the principle but must be the ground and medium in which the former makes itself real and takes on flesh and blood. If a philosophy is lacking this living foundation, which is commonly a sign that the ideal principle was originally only weakly at work within it, then it loses itself in those systems whose abstract concepts of aseity, modifications, and so forth, stand in the sharpest contrast with the living force and richness of reality. Where, however, the ideal principle is actually active to a great degree but cannot find a reconciling and mediating basis, it generates a bleak and wild enthusiasm that breaks out into self-mutilation or, like the priests of the Phrygian goddess, self-castration which is achieved in philosophy through the renunciation of reason and science."

Sprachgebrauch Abstraktion.”⁴²³ It is a separation⁴²⁴ of the acting from that, which it produces. This separation, which indeed began with Descartes’ dualism and continued with the idealism/realism archrivalry, found a strange inverted resolution in Kant, whereby nature became dependent on transcendental conditions of experience. This has yet again taken place through abstraction – abstraction of the human from the natural conditions of experience. The result of all this abstraction is thinking nature out of relevance, but it is also a kind of destruction of the human subject – insofar it leads to humanity uprooted from nature, left unable to think its material grounds and what sort of beings its members are. Abstraction, therefore, suggests itself as a problem, and posits itself persistently whenever the sphere of nature is limited and nature is not taken to ground the human. The result – a philosophy that begins with and in abstraction instead of beginning in a real ground – would be, as Schelling argues, merely negative, “flee[ing] into a complete wasteland devoid of all being”.⁴²⁵ Is abstraction, however, something more than a problem?

In the following, I will determine what abstraction is for Schelling, through an examination of the *Erster Entwurf* and *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*. Moreover, I will present a reading of Schelling’s late philosophy of natural process according to which the elements of the process are abstractions. They are, however, abstractions not in the sense of being mental cut-outs made for human convenience and/or thought-experimentation, but rather function as abstract stages of the process of temporal production, and are thus abstractions that move natural process forward. As a result of this discussion, it should then become clear that thinking about abstraction is not itself necessarily an abstraction; that abstraction can be thought of as processual, dynamic and positive – that it, short of being a hindrance or disease which leads to the denial of our natural material ground, the death of nature and the pathological entrapment of the mind within the sterile limited sphere of a certain kind of philosophy, is nothing but itself part of nature. The abstraction of the *Potenzenlehre* will be demonstrated to be tied inextricably with reality and thus be different from the abstraction of the merely negative philosophy.⁴²⁶ The problem, the weapon that destroys nature and with it *Naturphilosophie*, is

423 SW III, 506. English: “Each separation of acting from what is produced is called, in usual parlance, abstraction”.

424 Abstraction is separation, but not at all negation. Compare Whistler, D: “Schelling’s Doctrine of Abstraction” in *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy* 26 (2014) pp. 58-81, here p. 79.

425 *GPP*, p.142 - SW XIII, 76.

426 It is crucially important to note here that I do not at all dispute that the *Potenzenlehre* does itself have a negative side – I admit this much in chapter IV. The *Potenzenlehre* as a whole, however, as I will argue in that very same chapter, is more than just negative philosophy. This is what I mean in this above remark.

not abstraction as such, but that abstraction which is fully split off from the process of generation and cut off from history.⁴²⁷

II Culprit's Identikit

If one follows the genesis of *Potenenlehre* in Schelling's work, one will find that nature as composed of "bits" of power in Schelling goes all the way to the aforementioned *First Outline*, where to think the unconditioned that is nature, Schelling introduces abstract atoms – "simple actants" in order to think the unconditioned in nature:

Der Atomistiker versieht es nur darin, daß er *mechanische* Atomen, d.h. die Endlichkeit der *mechanischen* Theilbarkeit behauptet. Denn in jede materiellen Raum muß wie in dem mathematischen kein Theil der absolut-kleinste seyn; was *im Raum ist*, ist im Raum nur vermittelt einer *continuirlich-thätigen* Raumerfüllung; in jedem Theil des Raums ist also bewegende Kraft, sonach auch *Beweglichkeit*, daher *Trennbarkeit* jedes noch so kleinen Theils der Materie von allen übrigen ins Unendliche. Die ursprünglichen Aktionen aber *sind* nicht selbst *im Raum*, sie können nicht als *Theil* der Materie angesehen werden. Unsere Behauptung kann sonach Princip der *dynamischen Atomistik* heißen. Denn jede ursprüngliche Aktion ist für uns ebenso, wie der Atom für den Corpuscularphilosophen, wahrhaft *individuell*, jede ist in sich selbst ganz und beschlossen, und stellt gleichsam eine *Naturmonade* vor.⁴²⁸

These dynamic atoms are not themselves in space, so not themselves matter, but are units of power. The footnote to this paragraph is also important:

Unsere Meinung ist kurz diese: Wäre die Evolution der Natur je vollendet (was unmöglich ist), so würde nach diesem allgemeinen Zertrennen jedes Produkts in seine Faktoren nichts übrig bleiben als *einfache* Faktoren, d.h. Faktoren, die nicht selbst mehr Produkte sind. Diese einfachen Faktoren können daher nur als *ursprüngliche* Aktionen, oder - wenn es erlaubt ist so sich auszudrücken - als ursprüngliche Produktivitäten gedacht werden. Unsere Behauptung ist also nicht: es *gebe* in der Natur solche einfachen Aktionen, sondern nur, sie *seyen* die *ideellen* Erklärungsgründe der Qualität. Diese einfachen Aktionen lassen sich nicht wirklich aufzeigen - sie *existiren* nicht, sie sind das, was man in der Natur setzen, in der Natur denken muß, um die ursprünglichen Qualitäten zu erklären. Wir

427 Compare here Schmied-Kowarzik, W.: "Zur Dialektik des Verhältnisses von Mensch und Natur". In Sandkühler, H. J.: *Natur und geschichtlicher Prozeß. Studien zur Naturphilosophie F. W. J. Schelling*. Frankfurt/Main: 1986, pp. 145-174, here pp. 148-150, where Schmied-Kowarzik develops two possibilities for the destruction of nature. The first is the destruction through modern science, "durch die neuzeitliche Naturwissenschaft und ihre philosophische Bestimmung" ("through modern natural science and its philosophical determination", i.e. through abstraction, p. 148) and the second is due to the Kantian ethical privileging of the realm of freedom, where the natural causal determinations do not apply and where only human beings belong (p. 150).

428 SW III, 23. For English, see *First Outline*, pp. 20-21: "The atomist is mistaken only in that he assumes mechanical atoms, i.e., the finitude of mechanical divisibility. In every concrete space no part must be the absolute smallest, just as in mathematical space. What IS in space is in space by means of a continually active filling-up of space; therefore, in every part of space there is moving force, so also mobility, and thus infinite divisibility of each part of matter, no matter how small, from all the remaining ones. The original actants, however, ARE not themselves in space; they cannot be viewed as parts of matter. Accordingly, our claim can be called the principle of dynamic atomism."

brauchen also auch nur so viel zu beweisen, als wir behaupten, nämlich, daß solche einfache Aktionen *gedacht* werden müssen als ideelle Erklärungsgründe aller Qualität, und diesen Beweis haben wir gegeben.⁴²⁹

Nature here is taken as consisting in ideal *originary* actants, units of power or “productivities”, which are theoretical entities – Schelling is claiming that they do not exist. Already here Schelling is sceptical that static material mechanical atoms can explain the qualities in nature, and sees the need to resort to these dynamic atoms – each of them nothing but “a bit of force”. This later develops into the full-fledged *Potenzenlehre*. Before I move on there, however, the key term of this chapter – “abstract”, as it appears in the above passage – should be explained and qualified. It is easy to read this above passage as demonstrating that Schelling – at least at some point in his long philosophical life – was a scientific anti-realist (an instrumentalist, to use a term from the contemporary philosophical debate). He seems to be saying: “we philosophers need to explain quality, therefore we pragmatically postulate non-existent entities that help us understand and manipulate nature”. In light of such a beginning to his *naturphilosophische* project, one can rightfully ask whether it makes any sense to talk about forces that stand behind the process of nature as opposed to thinking nature in terms of useful fictions. This is why we have to think about what makes primary actants in the above passage abstract, for despite appearances, Schelling is doing ontology in the *First Outline*.⁴³⁰ If we look closely at the passage concerning simple actants, it is clear that they are that level of matter whereby it becomes indivisible. They are the lowest, the basic, the simple, the originary, the maximally decomposed (*Decomponierte*) and hence indecomposable (*Indecomponibel*).⁴³¹ Their abstraction stems precisely from here: it is not that we don’t know whether these actants exist or not; this is not a Kantian access problem and Schelling is not digging here at the unfathomable depths of nature, forced to postulate something just to

429 SW III, 23-24. For English, see *First Outline*, p. 21: “† In brief, our opinion is this: If the evolution of Nature were ever complete (which is impossible), then after the general decomposition of each product into its factors nothing would be left other than simple factors, i.e. factors which are no longer themselves products. Therefore, these simple factors can only be thought as originary actants, or—if it is permissible to express it this way—as originary productivities. Our opinion is thus not that there are such simple actants in Nature, but only that they are the ideal grounds of the explanation of quality. These simple actants do not really allow of demonstration—they do not exist; they are what one must posit in Nature, what one must think in Nature, in order to explain the originary qualities. Then we need only prove as much as we assert, namely, that such simple actions must be thought as ideal grounds of explanation of all quality, and we have provided this proof.”

430 Compare Rudolphi, M.: *Produktion und Konstruktion. Zur Genese der Naturphilosophie in Schellings Frühwerk*. Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt: 2001, pp. 140-141 with the thesis, that speculative physics is a realism.

431 See SW III, 34: “*Keine Materie der Natur ist einfach*. Denn da ein allgemeiner Zwang zur Combination der Elementar-Aktionen in der Natur herrscht, so kann keine Aktion für sich eine Form oder Gestalt produciren, jede Materie ist durch Combination entstanden. Aus der Erfahrung läßt sich dagegen nichts aufbringen, denn daß es *indecomponibel* Materien gibt, werden wir selbst als nothwendig ableiten.” Also see p. 39: “Um absolut *decomponibel* zu seyn, müßte ein solches Produkt dem *Absolutflüssigen* sich annähern, d.h. alle Elementar-Aktionen in der vollkommensten *Combination* in sich vereinigen. Um absolut *componibel* zu seyn, müßten die Aktionen in ihm beständig aus ihrer Combination gesetzt werden, es müßte ein beständig gestörtes Gleichgewicht der Aktionen stattfinden, d.h. Es müßte sich dem *Festen* annähern.” For English, see *First Outline*, pp. 29-30 and p. 39.

explain anything. The abstraction stems from the abstract stoppage of natural production at the level of these actants; what is abstract is that the *Naturphilosoph* drew a line after these actants and proclaimed: *this is fundamental*. I have already mentioned in my introduction, that Schelling is a philosopher who avoided – and at times this has made him look “protean” – drawing final lines and setting ultimate foundations, as he cannot conceive of a situation where such lines and foundations would not need lines and foundations in turn. So, for instance, a fundamental particle of matter is impossible for Schelling, and investigating such a thing naturphilosophically would be absurd. At the very least it would have been very difficult to explain, how those elementary particles have been generated, and even more difficult to explain how powers of nature develop out of them. Jason Wirth writes about this in his *Conspiracy of Life*: “For Schelling, the movement of thinking has no One beginning and no One conclusion, just discontinuous and infinite series of potencies and valences, eternal beginnings and eternal endings.”⁴³² Hence the fundamental level of *Naturphilosophie* for Schelling consists of processes, not particles. Moreover, a similar reason is at stake in Schelling’s refusal to draw the line at some level and declare that level to be the “fundamental” level of power, basic, simplest, below which there is no power. Explaining how what is above the line is generated is rather uncomplicated – it can be easily explained how the higher is grounded in the lower – but we run into problems when we want to question the generation of the line itself, the fundamentals: if there is no activity beneath the grounding level, how in the world could the activity at the grounding level arise? It is not surprising that Schelling has no answer to the question of something arising from nothing, and his response to positing fundamentals follows: when we posit a level to be fundamental, that is simply the drawing of an arbitrary line, under which we postulate the activity to stop.⁴³³ As Iain Grant points out, we cannot think the inception of the universe – if we were to, then the universe-inception we would be thinking about would be different from the one that brought us here, the former (i.e., the one we are thinking about) being clearly consequent on the latter and on our existence.⁴³⁴ Any time a *Naturphilosoph* wants to think potencies, any beginning he would take would be, then, not a beginning in some absolute sense. Any attempt to turn the potencies of the *Potenzenlehre*, or the primary productivities of the *Erster Entwurf*, into units, and give

432 Wirth, J.: *Conspiracy of Life: Meditations of Schelling and his Time*, Albany: 2003, pp. 19; vgl. auch Alderwick, C.: “Nature’s Capacities. Schelling and Contemporary Power-Based Ontologies“ in *Angelaki* 24/1 (2016) pp.59-76, here pp. 63: “For Schelling, powers are more than just certain properties which objects have, but are themselves the fundamental ontological constituents. In the Naturphilosophie, the answer to the question “Of what does reality, at the basic level, consist?” will be powers, all the way down.”

433 There are no basic levels: there are, of course, principles, but not unconditioned ones, and everything that was a principle ceases to be a principle and becomes a mere stage: “Was nicht mehr Princip seyn kann, wird Stufe, Stufe zum Princip, zum wahren bleibenden, in dem nichts Voraussetzliches mehr ist.” – SW XI, 328. English: “What can no longer be a principle becomes a *stage*, a stage on way to principle, to truly persisting, in which nothing more is presumable”.

434 *Nature Thought*, p. 30

them points of application whereby they begin, would be giving them merely local beginning, almost entirely arbitrary – a line drawn by abstraction just to give the current investigation a starting point. Once again: the problem here, for Schelling, is not infinite regress – it would be that the stopping of the regress at any level would have no better justification than its stopping at any other level: i.e., convenience and the purposes of a specific investigation at hand. Schelling’s “simple actants” from the *First Outline* are abstractions not because we are not able to tell whether they exist or not, not because we postulate them as thought-entities, but because we cut them off from their grounds and designate them as basic without any weightier ontological reason than provisional simplicity.⁴³⁵ True to Schelling’s antipathy to atomism I have mentioned before, they are also “atoms” only in the sense that we treat them as such. Hence: when Schelling says that simple actants don’t exist and are abstractions, then that means that they don’t exist in nature as *simple* actants, not that there are no actants in nature *tout court*. We can conclude the same from Schelling’s reflections on the empirical method in his *Darstellung des Philosophischen Empirismus: Naturphilosophie* has a limit which it cannot overcome: despite its progress, it does not reach pure facts.⁴³⁶ Hence, philosophy finds a provisional starting point (which is also hopefully *treated* as provisional), posits its boundary at that position, and thinks starting from this boundary. This is the special Schellingian abstraction which Markus Gabriel discusses so well in the third lecture of his Aarhus series – the abstraction which any thinker undertakes from his own context, from actuality, when he engages in philosophising:

Schelling claims that there are really two levels of abstraction where Hegel only sees one: first, there are the capacities of abstraction justified within Hegel’s system. Second, there is an initial abstraction from actuality which cannot take place against the background of the notion of a rationally intelligible activity. The second abstraction is the actual process by which historically situated agents are motivated to give an account of themselves as pure thinkers in the context of

435 Saying here that nevertheless these primary actants are merely ideal, fictional explanatory entities just because Schelling decides to adopt them as units of productivity would be similar to claiming that gravity is merely ideal just because we think of it as a force of mutual attraction, while it is far from that scientifically simple and can be explained further.

436 SW X, 231-232: “Doch auch die Naturphilosophie fand in sich selbst eine Schranke, die sie nicht sogleich überwinden konnte. Worin bestand diese Schranke der Naturphilosophie? Um es mit Einem Wort zu sagen, darin, daß im Grunde auch sie nicht über die *bloße* Thatsache hinausgekommen war. In der reinen Thatsache ist eigentlich nichts enthalten, als daß der Weltproceß auf einem Uebergewicht beruht, das dem Subjekt stufenweise über das Objekt gegeben wird – ob aber dieses Uebergewicht ein aus der Natur des sich erzeugenden, sich selbst verwirklichenden Wesens nothwendig folgendes, oder ob es ein durch freie Ursächlichkeit hervorgebrachtes und ertheiltes ist, wird durch die *bloße* Thatsache nicht entschieden.” English: “Yet all *Naturphilosophie* finds in itself a limit which it cannot directly overcome. What does this limit of *Naturphilosophie* consist in? To put it pithily: in that it too is fundamentally unable to get beyond the naked fact. Pure fact contains, for all intents and purposes, nothing but that the world-process rests on a preponderance given to the subject, stage-wise, over the object – however, whether this preponderance necessarily follows some self-actualising entity which generates itself out of nature, or whether it is produced and issued through free causality is not determined through naked fact.”

negative philosophy which entered the scene of the history of self-consciousness with Greek humanism.⁴³⁷

This second level of abstraction is something Schelling remains constantly aware of, and something for which he feels the need to forge a positive philosophy. Furthermore, if we take the case of the simple actants as exemplary, we can say that abstraction consists in two moments. The first – trivially – is localization and limitation: in order to draw something away from something else (an element from its context, a productivity from the chains of natural process/production), this context must first be at least minimally delimited. Abstraction, then, always begins with some kind of localization, with zooming into a node before its extraction. The simple actants are thoroughly localized at the deepest level of material nature possible. This moment of localization taken alone, however, is not yet abstraction, as locality – boundedness by antecedents and consequents⁴³⁸ – is the feature of anything and everything finite. True abstraction is when the localized node of the natural process is then taken to be somehow independent – simple, basic or having undergone such a qualitative transformation while arising from whatever came before it, that it can shed the after-influence of its antecedent. Schelling invites us to temporarily consider the simple actants separately from any grounding principle, but rather as the basis for explaining everything in nature. Such an element cannot but be abstract – but this is not quite the problematic murderous abstraction.

III The *Potenzenlehre*

With this, we can look at how abstraction plays out in the networks of the *Potenzenlehre*. I will focus here on the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*. Recall: in the *Darstellung*, the potency -A is pure Can, mere ability or subject of existence, +A is pure existence or object, and $\pm A$ is the subject-object. While presenting this model, Schelling first gives its form, a bare-bones schematic of the three elements. The potencies operate as follows: -A is the material principle:⁴³⁹ unlimited, undefined, and dark. +A is the limit introduced into -A, and thus is being – the pure Can, -A, is offset by +A, “das rein Seyende”.⁴⁴⁰ The -A determined by the +A therefore produces $\pm A$ as a result – a real individual being, which is simultaneously that which is, and that which has the capacity to be.⁴⁴¹ In this bare-bones schematic, Schelling then points out, “noch von keiner Wirklichkeit die Rede ist, nur vom Existirenden in der Idee”,⁴⁴² i.e. it is negative, an abstraction. Taking this series of three elements is Schelling’s attempt to clarify

437 *Aarhus III*, p. 126.

438 *Nature Thought*, p. 26.

439 See SW XI 388, quoted and translated in footnote 287 in this work.

440 SW XI 389.

441 All singular things are like this: they simultaneously are and contain possibilities to have effects. Schelling agrees with the Platonic definition of being as power.

442 SW X, 305. English: “it is not yet to speak of actuality, but only of existing in the idea.”

the form by cutting away from it as much content as possible, leaving solely a “reiner Vernunft-Organismus” or a “Vernunft-Idee”.⁴⁴³ In the hypothetically distilled and dissected unfolding of any natural process, the raw indeterminacy of sheer Can -A, the past “potency” which has already once spent its powers, the cold harsh raw determinacy and formalism of +A and the (relatively) separate existence of their product $\pm A$ are all abstractions, powerless and static. It is the simplified logical kernel of the *Potenzenlehre*, which is localized as an answer to the question of reason – “Was denke ich, wenn ich das Existierende denke?”⁴⁴⁴ The transition from thinking this reason-idea out of negativity and to thinking the world outside the reason-organism⁴⁴⁵ is to posit its first element of it as existing in itself (“wir erst das erste Element derselben als *für sich* Seyendes setzen”⁴⁴⁶) and then following its elements through the cycle of mutual extantment. To put this as simply as possible, the pure-reason-organism is to be plugged back in into the nets of the world just as it was previously surgically extracted. The *Naturphilosoph* extracts the mechanism to examine, understand, all the better localize and retrace it; when he understands the mechanism, he reconnects it with that which it is a mechanism of, and witnesses the examined process run before him in its full glory as a result. Without this reconnection, though, without applying the *Potenzenlehre* to actual phenomena, its formalistic core is an abstract representation of a certain process, no more; its separate elements are also no more than specks of abstraction unless put into a relationship of mutual extantment, i.e. unless they are found in actuality and allowed to have an effect.

This reconnection, “plugging back in”, is however not some kind of pure “thinking potencies into existence” – the point here is not to think hard enough until whatever thousand deadly abstract cuts you were making miraculously undo, fuse and concretise. The reconnection is rather one of excavation, tracing the productive history of whatever supposedly abstract element we are examining into both its future and the past. If we look at Schelling here:

Um also zur Welt außer der Idee zu gelangen, müssen wir erst das erste Element derselben als *für sich* Seyendes setzen, und die Frage ist, wie dieß seyn könne. Nun haben wir aber gleich anfangs erkannt, daß jenes Subjekt zwar der Idee nach nur dem höheren Objekt (+ A) zugewendet, nicht Subjekt oder Potenz seiner selbst, sondern eben des Existierenden sey, aber *seiner Natur nach* doch ebensowohl dieses (Potenz seiner selbst) seyn, vom unendlichen Seyn sich abwenden kann, um für

443 SW X, 306. English: “organism of pure reason” or “idea of reason”.

444 SW X, 303. English: “What do I think, when I think what exists?”

445 We must be careful not to make the leap from the state where the idea exists to the state where the world emerges from the idea and the idea becomes a sort of material ground for the world: “Wohlzumerken, wir sagen nicht: das -A erhebt sich aus seiner Negativität, damit die Welt außer der Idee entstehe, sondern: *wenn* eine Welt außer der Idee gedacht wird, so kann sie nur auf diese Weise, und kann dann ferner nur als eine *solche* gedacht werden.” – SW X 307. English: “It must be noted that we do not say: -A lifts itself from its negativity so that the world arises outside the idea, but: *if* a world is to be thought outside the idea, it can only be in this manner, and further it can only be thought *as such*.” What we have here is a move from thinking of the idea to thinking of the world.

446 SW X, 307.

sich selbst Seyendes zu seyn; in welchem Betracht dieses Können als die ihrer Natur nach zweideutige Natur, als $\Delta\upsilon\alpha\varsigma$, sich darstellt. Indem wir aber ein Auseinandergehen der Idee denken, müssen wir doch sie zugleich als unaufheblich in *dem* Sinne ansehen, daß die Einheit zwar suspendirt - vorübergehend im Gedanken aufgehoben werden kann, aber nur in der Absicht, daß sie sich wiederherstelle, aber eben damit verwirkliche, sich als die nicht aufzuhebende auch *erweise*.

Die Einheit wird also nur differenziert, um zu ihr als wirklich existirender zu gelangen. [...]Und eben diese Bewegung oder dieser durch drei Hauptmomente hindurchgehende Proceß ist es nun auch, den wir zunächst darzustellen gedenken.⁴⁴⁷

We see here that in order to exit the negativity of the mere idea, Schelling suggests we treat the potencies not as a threefold unity, but also not as a disjointed threefold, but rather as an operative unity, dividing and reconstituting itself. The potencies exist only in their becoming and unfolding. Without this, taken alone, they are abstract. The interweaving complexity of the *Potenzenlehre* should be appreciated here: even if we treat the potencies as functions, which can in actuality be fulfilled by various phenomena, this is still only a method of presentation. The potencies are not some elements added on to things; they rather construct the things. We cannot claim that in the *Potenzenlehre* neatly individuated independent substances play neatly defined roles – as we have seen, the roles are fluid and transform into each other. The things which act as different potencies at different times are themselves generated through what they do, and are added into the natural process. In this sense, the potencies could be likened to physically instantiated mathematical functions, and not the functions of a tool or a role that an actor can play. We can thus conclude that the potencies are not merely abstractions, at least when we take them to be what they are.⁴⁴⁸

This, combined with Schelling's persistent view that there is no basic level to nature gives us the key as to what to do with abstraction to bring it back to life – it is such bringing back to life that Schelling writes about in the *Weltalter*:

447 SW X, 307-8. English: "Thus in order to reach the world outside the idea, we must first posit the first element as existing *for itself*, and the question is how this could be. Now, we have initially acknowledged that this subject according to the idea is only directed towards the higher object (+A), not towards subject or the potency of itself, but precisely rather of the existent, but *according to its nature* it is just as well that of the former (its own potency), able to direct itself away from infinite being in order to be existent for itself; in which regard this Can presents presents itself according to its nature as ambivalent nature, as $\Delta\upsilon\alpha\varsigma$. Insofar as we however think a partition of the idea, we must still view it simultaneously as unsublatable in *that* sense, which indeed suspends unity – so that it can temporary be sublated in thoughts, but only with the aim that it reinstate itself, but with it actualise itself, thus *prove* itself as not to be sublated. Unity thus only becomes differentiated so that it as actually existent can be reached. [...] And precisely this movement or these three main moments of passing process is now what we intend to present in what follows."

448 See Bernard Bosanquet's principle of ontological justice: "Everything is real, so long as you do not take it for more than it is." from his book *The Principle of Individuality and Value* (Bosanquet, B: *The Principle of Individuality and Value*, London: 1912, p. 240) and Iain Hamilton Grant's essay *Everything* (2015), where the potencies's additive process is explained.

Ebenso kann der Mensch jene Folge von Prozessen, wodurch aus dem höchsten Einfalt des Wesens zuletzt die unendliche Mannigfaltigkeit erzeugt wird, in sich durchlaufen und unmittelbar gleichsam erfahren, ja, genau zu reden, muß er sie in sich selbst erfahren.⁴⁴⁹

Schelling here proposes to ground the process we are investigating in its past and its future, ultimately ungrounding it in both directions. These operations of both past and future grounding/ungrounding are inevitable, because whatever element we are examining cannot but have a causal history. Even abstract elements, even abstraction itself – they all have a ground.

The presentation of the potencies at the beginning of *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* is thus abstract only insofar as Schelling uses it to set up a philosophical toolbox. Whenever the philosopher is to think abstractly and give abstraction justice, it is only possible through recognizing that, if abstraction means unconditional declaration of independence and autonomy, then it can only be sterility and premeditated murder of whatever is abstracted. Abstraction is precisely local and conditional – conditional on the abstracted object's previous pluggedness into networked processes of concretion. This connection/disconnection is what distinguishes the use of abstraction as a surgical tool and its use as a weapon of murder, capable of killing everything, even itself – i.e., turning abstraction to meaningless isolation and sterility. The problem of *Naturphilosophie*, the weapon that attempts to strike down nature then, is not purely abstraction, but abstraction torn from the processes of natural production and unhinged from history.

On the previous pages, we have consider the boundary of *Naturphilosophie* and how this boundary leads us to think the provisional grounding of philosophy. The distinction which Schelling draws in his later texts between the positive and the negative philosophy points to the fact that provisional boundaries function similarly in transcendental philosophy as well – such a philosophy begins with reflection upon itself, takes this to be its absolute beginning and considers this level of reflection to be the fundament of all thinking:

Hier scheint denn nichts natürlicher, als daß jede Philosophie damit anfangt, auf sich selbst zu reflektiren; da sie nun nicht umhin kann, sich bewußt zu werden, daß es in ihr um ein Erkennen zu thun sey, so scheint ebenso natürlich, daß sie vor allem die Art und Natur dieses ihr eigenthümlichen Erkennens zu erforschen suche; unvermeidlich aber wird sie dann ferner die Natur des Erkennens *überhaupt* in Betracht ziehen müssen. Insofern würde Kant Recht haben, wenn er behauptet, daß die Philosophie mit einer Kritik des Erkenntnißvermögens

449 WA I 14-15. English: "Similarly man can traverse this consequence of processes through which out of the highest unfolding of substance the endless manifold is generated, and immediately experience this consequence. Yes – to be precise, he must experience them in himself."

anzufangen habe, diese könnte zwar nie auf die Wissenschaft selbst, aber doch zu der Vorwissenschaft der Philosophie - zu jener führen, die noch im Suchen des Anfangs begriffen ist. Wenn eine solche Kritik des Erkenntnißvermögens nur so leicht, und besonders, wenn dieses Vorhaben, das Erkennende zu untersuchen, in der Abstraktion, in welcher man es meint, ausführbar wäre! Man kann sich wohl vorstellen, dabei auf das bloße Erkennen sich beschränken zu können, und damit gewonnen zu haben, daß vorerst das *Seyn* ausgeschlossen bleibe, nicht in Betracht komme, denn mit dem bloßen Erkennen, weil es uns näher liegt als das *Seyn*, glaubt man auch leichter und einfacher fertig werden zu können, und dann vielleicht doch von dem Erkennen aus irgend einen Weg in das *Seyn* finden zu können.⁴⁵⁰

But Schelling warns: such abstraction does not hold its ground. When it, so to speak, is let loose, then the philosophy based upon it no longer encounters the boundary of abstraction as a convenient provisional base, which the thinker uses to construct something, but as a limitation which hinders the progress of philosophy, at least until this philosophy overcomes the boundary and returns “to being”:

Denn um was ist es hiebei zu thun? Antwort: um ein Erkennen des Erkennens. Dadurch habe ich ja aber das Erkennen selbst zum Gegenstand gemacht, und es damit so gut für ein Seyendes als irgend ein anderes erklärt. Der Gegensatz oder die Unterscheidung zwischen dem Erkennenden und dem Seyenden fällt also gleich mit der ersten Reflexion dahin, und ich *kann* dem *Seyn*, das ich vermeiden und gleichsam (wie einen Feind) umgehen wollte, doch nicht ausweichen. Denn sowohl das Erkennende als das, was erkannt wird, - beides ist ein Seyendes, und gerade darin scheinen sie eins, oder dieses scheint ihr Gemeinschaftliches, daß sie - beide - *Seyende* sind. Es wird sogar nicht fehlen können, daß der, welcher vom bloßen Erkennen ausgeht, das Erkennende als das gleichsam vorzugsweise Seyende ansehe, und daß er dem, was nicht das Erkennende ist, entweder nur ein geringeres oder am Ende *gar* kein *Seyn* zugestehet.⁴⁵¹

450 SW X, 232-233. English: “For here nothing seems to be more natural than for each philosophy to begin with reflecting upon itself; for it cannot avoid becoming aware that it concerns knowing, so it seems to be just as natural that it first of all would strive to investigate the type and nature of this knowing peculiar to it. It is however unavoidable that it further must take account of the nature of knowing *at all*. Kant was correct to this extent when he claimed that philosophy is to begin with a critique of the faculties of knowledge, but this could never lead to science itself, rather to the preliminary science of philosophy – to that, which is already captured in the search for the beginning. If only this critique of the faculties of knowledge, and more specifically, if this enterprise, to investigate knowing in the abstraction, in which one means it, could be easy! We could imagine that to be able to restrict oneself to mere knowing, one is to exclude being, not take it into account, for with mere knowing, since it lies closer to us than being, one would think that they would be finished sooner and with less effort, and then maybe still be able to find some way out of knowing into being.”

451 SW X, 233. English: “For what does it revolve around here? Answer: around the knowing of knowing. Through this I have made knowing itself into an object, and it is with this that it is explained for an existent as something else. The opposite or the definition between the knowing and the being thus falls away with the first reflection and I *can* still not avoid *being*, which I wanted to avoid and around which I simultaneously (like a fiend) wanted to skirt. For both the knowing and that which is known – both are an existent, and precisely therein they appear to be one, or it seems to be their commonality: that they both are existents. It would not fail to be the case, even, that whoever begins from mere knowing views the knowing as preferentially being, and that he grants to that which is not knowing either less being or no being at all.”

Pure thinking is the beginning of all philosophy, but a return to being is unavoidable as this pure thinking hits its ultimate boundary. The differentiation between the boundary of philosophy as its support (or abstraction as a precise instrument) and the boundary as hindrance (or abstraction as murder weapon) brings us to the next set of questions: what position does abstraction occupy within the framework of the positive philosophy and that of the negative? What positions does the *Potenzenlehre* occupy in both these frameworks? Is the *Potenzenlehre* merely negative? In order to answer these two questions, we have to also consider a third – the question of the relationship between positive and negative philosophies. The *Potenzenlehre* would belong to the negative philosophy – or so it seems, for it first arises in the time of *Identitätsphilosophie*, a time which Schelling in the *Philosophie der Offenbarung*⁴⁵² explicitly marks as negative. Furthermore, the two texts which discuss the late *Potenzenlehre* at its most detailed are *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* and *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* – so a text which Schelling explicitly calls “reinrational” and another on *Naturphilosophie* – an apparently negative topic. It could be concluded from the above that the potencies are merely negative elements of Schelling’s philosophy, and if it were true, then Schelling’s often-repeated claim that there is only one philosophy would be problematic. In that case, there would have been, within Schelling’s late philosophy, an unbridgeable chasm which would have made this philosophy into an odd methodological dualism and put into question the entire method of the positive philosophy, which is meant to be grounded through a transition from the negative.⁴⁵³ On the basis of these considerations, the next chapter is dedicated to answering the above questions and investigating the relationship between the positive philosophy and the negative.

452 Compare for instance SW XIII, 55.

453 On the relationship between time and abstraction, especially negative philosophy as the domain of “apparent time” (“scheinbare Zeit”), see Unger, D.: *Schlechte Unendlichkeit. Zu einer Schlüsselfigur und ihrer Kritik in der Philosophie des Deutschen Idealismus*, München: 2015, pp. 167-168.

**Part II: Ontological Problemata in Schelling's Late Philosophy in
Light of the *Potenzenlehre***

IV

Treating Double Vision

The problematic of abstraction which we have discussed in the previous section has taken us to the question of the ontological status of the potencies. It is well-known that in his late philosophy Schelling has dealt with ontological questions, or to put it more generally, questions of being, in a specific manner, namely by drawing a distinction between positive and negative philosophies. This chapter will continue pursuing the question of the ontological status of the potencies – their relation to being – in light of this positive-negative distinction, and attempt to place the potencies within the positive and/or negative philosophies' territory. The distinction between positive and negative philosophies, summarized briefly, is as follows: the negative philosophy is that which investigates the *essence* [das Wesen] of things, that is, *what* something is. In apparent opposition to that, the positive philosophy is concerned with the actual existence of things, namely with *that* they are. It seems that Schelling construes this distinction as one between a philosophy of reason and a philosophy based on experience, without, however, basing the distinction on or mapping it onto the historical difference between rationalism and empiricism – at least, Schelling never makes use of Leibniz, Spinoza and the British empiricists as examples of the above two philosophies, when he writes about them at all.⁴⁵⁴ However, since this distinction is central to Schelling's late philosophy, it is practically impossible to avoid the question of whether various parts of Schelling's later thought are positive or negative. In case such a question is raised of the *Potenzenlehre*, it could perhaps be answered at first that the potencies obviously belong to the domain of negative philosophy.⁴⁵⁵ Although our above definition of both philosophies is a very preliminary one and will be expanded upon in what follows, we could perhaps already formulate the following chain of reasoning: we know that Schelling addresses the potencies in a text called *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie*, "Presentation of Purely Rational Philosophy", and everything that is "reinrational" or purely rational must – so it seems – be

454 See on this subject SW XIII, 58: "Schon hier also [gleich nach dieser Unterscheidung] wird es uns wahrscheinlich dünken, daß, wofern die Frage von dem *Was* ist, diese Frage an die *Vernunft* sich richtet, wogegen – *daß* irgend etwas, wenn es auch ein von der Vernunft aus Eingesehenes ist, *daß* dieses Ist, d. h. *daß* es existirt, nur die Erfahrung lehren kann. Zu beweisen, *daß* es existirt, kann schon darum nicht Sache der Vernunft seyn, weil bei weitem das Meiste, was sie von sich aus erkennt, in der Erfahrung *vorkommt*: für das aber, was Sache der Erfahrung, bedarf es keines Beweises, daß es existire, es ist eben darin schon als ein wirklich Existirendes bestimmt. Also wenigstens in Bezug auf alles, was in der Erfahrung vorkommt, kann es nicht Sache der Vernunftwissenschaft seyn, zu beweisen, *daß* es existirt; sie würde etwas Ueberflüssiges thun." For English, see *GPP*, p. 129.

455 Compare for instance: Czuma, H.: *Der philosophische Standpunkt in Schellings Philosophie der Mythologie und Offenbarung*. Innsbruck: 1969, pp. 135ff, where Czuma defines the potencies as moments of essence ["Momenten des Wesens"], and the *Wesen*, as we remember, belongs to the domain of negative philosophy.

surely negative. We also know that the negative philosophy “gets to the bottom of the issue” (or, as the German would have it, “kommt hinter der Sache”):

Aber was ist hier „*hinter* der Sache“? Nicht das Seyn; denn dieses ist vielmehr das Vordere der Sache, das, was unmittelbar in die Augen fällt, und was hierbei schon vorausgesetzt wird; denn wenn ich hinter eine Sache, z.B. ein Ereigniß, kommen will, so muß mir die Sache, hier also das Ereigniß, schon gegeben seyn. Hinter der Sache ist also nicht das Seyn, sondern das Wesen, die Potenz, die Ursache (dieß alles sind eigentlich nur gleichbedeutende Begriffe).⁴⁵⁶

“Die Potenz”, potency, is here (in Schelling’s *Begründung der Positiven Philosophie*) apparently understood as an element of the negative philosophy, which takes as its topic of investigation *das Wesen*, and along with it, the synonymous concepts of potency and cause. Even if we were to point out that “potency” in this particular text refers to a very specific kind of potency, namely the infinite potency of being, which we have discussed briefly in chapter I and will discuss further in what follows, we would not be able to deny that the potencies are, in a certain sense, essences and causes. First of all, they are essences because they are *Seiende*, usually translated into English as “that which has being”⁴⁵⁷ and not *that which is*. The *Seiende* are principles which express *whatness* and have only a relative being – this is a point often repeated in the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie*, which emphasises, as I have already pointed out, that the potencies simultaneously do and do not exist (if in different sense of the word, and not as a simple contradiction). Furthermore, it seems that Schelling unequivocally calls the potencies in the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* “Wesen” (calling instances of the first potency -A “verdoppeltes Wesen”: “Wir haben die ersten Wesen im Raum als Subjekte bezeichnet. Aber diese Wesen haben zwei Seiten, sie lassen sich betrachten, einmal sofern sie *in sich* sind, und dann sofern sie gegen die höhere Macht sich als Materie

456 SW XIII, 75-76. For English see *Grounding* p. 142: “But what is here, at ‘the bottom of the issue’? Not being, for this, on the contrary, is what lies on the surface of the issue, that which immediately comes to mind, and, thus, what is already presupposed in all this: if I want to get to the bottom of an issue, for example, an event, then the issue—in this instance, the event—must already be given. At the bottom of this issue is, therefore, not being, but the essence, the potency, the cause (properly speaking these are all just synonymous concepts).”

457 See Jason Wirth’s translator’s introduction to the *Ages of the World*, p. xxxi for this. For questions as to what this “das Seyende” means exactly, see e.g. SW XI 354-355: “Das Seyende aber sind gewisse erste Unterschiede und Gegensätze; jedes Seyende, das einen solchen Unterschied ausdrückt – jedes ist nur *das*, was das Seyende ist; man sagt nicht, daß es das Seyende ist, sondern man sagt nur; *was* das Seyende ist – jedes *so* Seyende wird ein schlechthin Einartiges und Einsinniges, d.h. ein ἀπλοῦν seyn (ein Einartiges: denn jedes der einfachen Elemente kann nur das seyn, das es ist, nur an der Stelle, die es hat). Der Beruf zum Philosophiren zeigt sich in dem Bedürfniß, das nicht ruhen läßt, eh’ man sich bewußt ist, auf die schlechthin einfachen, untrüglichen Elemente gekommen zu seyn.” English: “But that which has being is certain first differences and oppositions; each has-being, which expresses such a difference is only that [das], what is has-being; one does not say that it is the has-being, but only *what* the has-being is. Each such-has-being becomes only univocal par excellence, i.e. an ἀπλοῦν (univocal: for each of the simple elements can only be that which it is, only at the position which it has). The job of philosophising manifests in the need, which does not abate, as soon as one is aware of it, to come to the absolutely simple, unerring elements.”

verhalten”)⁴⁵⁸ – although it is not fully clear, in what sense and on what basis one can refer to those three elements as three essences, for they *are* and actually function only together. Despite this, one can nevertheless subscribe to the position that the three potencies functioning together construct the essences of things. At another point in the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* potencies are simply referred to as different kinds of being (“verschiedene Arten des Seyns”)⁴⁵⁹ and are made into principles of being:

Nicht das Subjekt, nicht das Objekt, nicht das Subjekt-Objekt ist, sondern das bestimmte Eine ist das Subjekt, ist das Objekt, und ist das Subjekt-Objekt, d. h. diese Elemente, die Principien zu seyn scheinen konnten, sind zu bloßen Attributen des Einen herabgesetzt, das in ihnen das vollkommen und ganz sich Besitzende ist, ohne daß daraus folgt, daß es nicht auch in seinem für-sich-Seyn dieß seyn würde.⁴⁶⁰

A principle is not something positively existing; if something is a principle, it does not show us *that* something is, but points to the *whatness* of something, or at least the way and mode in which something exists. Are the potencies then not the principles of reason which negative philosophy appears to lean on, for it is the philosophy of reason, even though Schelling claims that its method is inductive? And anyway, Schelling describes this inductive method as follows:

Bestünde man also darauf, daß es nur zwei Methoden gebe, deductive (unter welche auch die demonstrative fällt) und inductive, so müßte man [...] also aussprechen, daß sie zweierlei Arten unter sich begreife: die eine Art der Induction schöpfe die Elemente aus der Erfahrung, die andere aus dem *Denken selbst*, und diese letzte sey die, durch welche die Philosophie zum Princip gelange.⁴⁶¹

The negative philosophy’s inductive method induces its elements from the very thought itself, without recourse to experience. A philosophy which takes recourse to principles derived from thought and then in turn derives its results from these principles appears to definitely be negative.⁴⁶² Finally, Schelling claims in the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* that the potencies

458 SW X, 328. English: “We have designated the first beings/essences in space as subjects. But these beings/essences have two sides, they let themselves be considered once insofar as they are *in* themselves and then insofar as they behave against the higher power as matter.”

459 SW XI, 302.

460 SW XI, 318. English: “It is not that the subject, not the object, not the subject-object is, but the determinate One is the subject, is the object and is the subject-object, i.e. those elements, which could appear to be principles, are reduced to mere attributes of the One, which in them is the perfect and fully self-possessed, without it following that it would not also be this being in its being for-itself.”

461 SW XI, 321, English: “If one insisted that there were only two principles: the deductive (under which the demonstrative would also fall) and the inductive, so one would also be obliged [...] to utter that they grasp two kinds. One kind, that of induction, would extract elements from becoming and the other – from *thinking itself*, and this latter be that through which philosophy would reach the principle.”

See also the discussion of the three elements at SW XI, 313, 317, 331-333 and at many other points in the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie*, where Schelling attempts to present the potencies as an Aristotelian typology of principles.

462 Dieter Korsch writes about the principles of the purely rational philosophy concerning their positivity and negativity (which will be considered in further detail in this chapter): “Den Prinzipien des Seins eignet ein doppelter Charakter. Auf der einen Seite sind sie als *Prinzipien* vor und über dem Sein, ihm apriorisch. Auf der

exist in the idea (at least at the beginning), and that we need to step out of the idea to reach being.⁴⁶³ Thus we have, until now, seen many clues to the effect that the potencies are a part of negative philosophy. However, in order to test this conclusion, we should establish the definitions of positive and negative philosophy in more precise detail and take seriously the position that the potencies could also be a part of positive philosophy. To that purpose, we should also examine the relationship between the two philosophies – in case there is, between them, a relation which is not that of complete opposition, then the *Potenzenlehre* should also have a certain position with the positive philosophy, and this position, whatever it is, should be clarified. If we, however, are to discover, that the relationship between the positive and the negative philosophy is merely that of opposition, then we would be faced with a problem within Schelling’s late philosophy, namely that it postulates, despite its emphasis that there is only one philosophy, an unbridgeable gap between the positive and the negative, threatening the unity of the entire philosophical enterprise. Hence, it appears improbable that the two philosophies are fully separate from each other, although most literature remains cautious in asserting their unity.⁴⁶⁴ In this chapter, therefore, I plan to argue that late Schelling’s two

anderen Seite haben sie ihr Leben als Prinzipien des *Seins* nur im Sein selbst.” English: “The principles of being have a double character proper to them. On the one hand, they are as *principles* before and above being, a priori with respect to it. On the other hand, they have their life as principles of *being* only in being itself.” Korsch, D.: *Der Grund der Freiheit. Eine Untersuchung zur Problemgeschichte der positiven Philosophie und zur Systemfunktion des Christentums im Spätwerks F.W.J. Schellings*. München: 1980, p. 183. For another discussion of principles see *ibid.* pp. 183-185.

463 See SW X, 305: “[S]o ist doch nur a + b + c das Existirende zu nennen oder der Prototyp (das Urbild) aller Existenz, wo noch von keiner Wirklichkeit die Rede ist, nur vom Existirenden in der Idee [...]” [English: “[S]o only a+b+c are to be called existent, or the prototype of all existence, where there is no talk of actuality yet, [only of existence in the idea.]”] and *ibid.* 306: “Das Existirende ist das Vollendete, das in sich Beschlossene, Anfang (-A) Mittel (+A) und Ende (\pm A) in sich selbst, aber als Eins Habende - es ist das *Absolute* (quod omnibus numeris absolutum est), aber nur das Absolute in der *Idee*. Das Existirende ist vorerst nur Vernunft-Idee. Dennoch liegt in der Idee der Stoff und die Möglichkeit zu allem außer ihr Seyenden, es kann nichts existiren, dessen Wurzel nicht im Existirenden wäre.” – and then comes the problem: “Aber *wie* kann es zu einem Seyn außer der Idee kommen?” English: “The existent is the complete, the self-enclosed, beginning (-A), middle (+A) and end (\pm A) in itself, but as a haver of unity it is the absolute (quod omnibus numeris absolutum est), yet only absolute in the *idea*. The existent is primarily only an idea of reason. Nevertheless in the idea there lie the matter and possibility for all that has being outside it; nothing can exist without having had its root in the existent. But how *can* it come to being outside the idea?”

464 It is not usually claimed in the literature that the two philosophies are completely separate from one another. It is however also not at all difficult to find philosophers which defend this position – so, Karl Jaspers writes that there is no transition from the negative to the positive, but also that the positive philosophy is “wie eine Theologie” (like a theology) and has no method (see *Große und Verhängnis*, p. 100; 107), which Schelling, as we will see in what follows, denies out of hand. Perhaps Horst Fuhrmans portrays the two philosophies as most poignantly different, as he speaks of the negative philosophy as the dialectic philosophy of necessity and the positive as an undialectical thought about the Being of God (see. *Letzte Philosophie*, p. 49-50). For Schulz both philosophies have completely different methods (see *Vollendung des deutschen Idealismus*, p. 245). Alfred Denker calls both philosophies “independent sciences”: “je für sich selbständige Wissenschaften” (Denker, A.: “Der exzentrische Gott. Schellings Münchener Philosophie” In Denker, A. and Zaborowski, H.: *System – Freiheit – Geschichte*, Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt: 2004, pp. 1-36, here pp. 10-11), although he then acknowledges that they are not distinct when it comes to their object. For Wilson in *Schellings Mythologie* the *Das* which the positive philosophy is supposed to investigate is a “mystery” for thinking (*Schellings Mythologie*, p. 32), which suggests that the content of the positive philosophy somehow remains outside thought – a suspicion which is confirmed on p. 35, where Wilson strangely writes: “Positiv ist jede Lehre zu nennen, die eine Wirklichkeit außerhalb des

“philosophies” are not, as it were, two different unrelated domains of philosophy. As will become clear in the course of this chapter, one cannot fully split the concepts of cause and essence [*Wesen*], designated negative by Schelling, from being. When it comes to causes, at least when we are talking about actual causes and not merely abstractions, there are actual effects following from those causes, and when it comes to essences, those essences are essences of things which actually *are*. Furthermore, Schelling articulates another way in which principles are tied to being: “es ist nicht zu sagen, daß das Princip das Seyende hat, sondern umgekehrt, daß das Seyende das Princip hat”⁴⁶⁵ – what has being has the principle within it, and the principle is consequently a principle of the functioning of that which has being. Admittedly, there is a distinction between that, which is, and that, which has being – and yet they are both further distinguished from what is truly *abstract pure* thought – that with the principles of which alone we cannot even reach what *has being*:

Mit dem Princip, wie es im reinen Denken ist, d. h. festgehalten von dem Seyenden, konnten wir *nichts*, wie man zu reden pflegt, *anfangen*, denn es ist uns nicht *als* Princip.⁴⁶⁶

These principles, however, could be extracted from pure thought,⁴⁶⁷ and we could introduce them into our thinking first as abstractions used to think about thought and then connect them to being – to that, which is:

negativen Herrschaftsbereiches des Denkens behauptet”. English: “Every doctrine, which claims there to be an actuality outside the negative province of thinking is to be called positive”. The article Givsan H.: „‘Ekstasis’ oder die Chymische Hochzeit in Schellings ‚positiver‘ Philosophie“. In Paetzold, H. und Schneider, H. (Ed.): *Schellings Denken der Freiheit. Festschrift Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik zum 70. Geburtstag*, Kassel: 2010, pp. 111-134 at multiple points (e.g. p. 118, 127) discusses Schelling’s “fight” against the negative philosophy (“der Streit Schellings mit der negativen Philosophie”). In some Anglophone literature, the relationship between the positive and the negative philosophies is also presented as a separation: Andrew Bowie (Bowie, A.: *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy. An Introduction*. London/New , p. 88) writes of a “hiatus” between the two philosophies and Velkley in his article (translated into German) “Notwendigkeit des Irrtums” of “radikale[n] Wandel im Begriff der Philosophie” – a radical shift in the concept of philosophy from the negative to the positive and from the early Naturphilosophie to the negative philosophy (without really specifying what variation of the Naturphilosophie he means). See Velkley: R.L.: “Notwendigkeit des Irrtums. Schellings Selbstkritik und die Geschichte der Philosophie“. In Denker, A. und Zabrowski, H.: *System – Freiheit – Geschichte*, Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt, pp. 97-122, here p. 100 and 112). Christian Iber takes positive and negative philosophies to stand in a relationship of straightforward dualism (see Iber, C.: *Subjektivität, Vernunft und ihre Kritik. Prager Vorlesungen über den Deutschen Idealismus*. Frankfurt am Main: 1999, pp. 207-210. In beautiful contrast to those works, Walter Erhardt’s unifying touch is apparent here as well – for him, positive philosophy is not “about” revelation, or indeed about anything, but concern all domains in which freedom can be presented philosophically – see *Nur Ein Schelling*, p. 122. Even more beautiful is Marcela Garcia’s position in *The Significance of Aristotle for Schelling’s Last Philosophy* – she spells out in considerable detail, how much effort Schelling put into his late negative project, and how dearly he held it, based on his letters to family and friends, and so, she argues, the negative philosophy should be given more weight when Schelling’s late work is evaluated (see *Significance of Aristotle*, pp. ii, 4-8).

465 SW XI, 319-320.

466 SW XI, 354-355. English “With the principle as it is in pure thought, i.e. held back away from that which has being, we could *not*, as they say, *begin*, for to us it is not *as* a principle.”

467 For a discussion of the concept of “reines Denken“, which also stands on a higher level of abstraction than negative philosophy, see *Verständnis der Potenzenlehre* p. 101-102. Another good discussion of this same concept is also made in Malte Krüger’s *Göttliche Freiheit*, which goes to great lengths to make this concept intelligible. Krüger, who also argues that the positive and negative philosophies are not two different spheres or

Das Princip für sich, es nicht bloß durch das Seyende, sondern frei vom Seyenden zu haben, dieses also wird nicht mehr Sache des reinen Denkens, demnach nur Sache des über das unmittelbare Denken hinausgehenden, des wissenschaftlichen Denkens seyn können. Das zuvor im reinen Denken Gefundene wird nun selbst Gegenstand des Denkens, und in diesem Sinne könnte das über das einfache und unmittelbare Denken hinausgehende Denken wohl Denken über das Denken genannt werden, aber nicht, wie es diejenigen mißverstanden haben, die nicht mit dem Denken selbst, sondern mit dem Denken über das – natürlich dann völlig leere – Denken anfangen wollten. Mit dem Princip, wie es im reinen Denken ist, d. h. festgehalten von dem Seyenden, konnten wir *nichts*, wie man zu reden pflegt, *anfangen*, denn es ist uns nicht *als* Princip. Die Anziehung aber, die das Seyende auf es ausübt, beruht auf dem gänzlichen Nichtselbstseyn des letzteren (des Seyenden); damit wir also das Princip von ihm frei haben, muß das Seyende aus dem bloß potentiellen, hylischen Seyn, das ein relatives Nichtseyn ist, erhoben, die bloße *Potenz* des Selbstseyns, die in ihm ist, bis zu einer vom Princip unabhängigen Wirklichkeit in Wirkung gesetzt werden. Erscheint das *so* vom Princip unabhängig gewordene Wirkliche dennoch als ohnmächtig gegen das Princip (zuerst nur gegen sein nächst Höheres, zuletzt aber gegen das Princip), als dessen bedürftig und ihm am Ende unterworfen, *so* erscheint nun das Princip auch als das über alles andere Wirkliche siegreiche, und darum *an sich* Wirkliche, d. h. *als* Princip. Auf diese Weise wäre das früher rein noetisch (dialektisch) Gefundene in einen Proceß umgesetzt worden, und auf dem Wege des zur *Wissenschaft* auseinandergezogenen Denkens erreicht, was das einfache unmittelbare Denken nicht gewähren konnte. Denn das im reinen Denken Gefundene war nicht Wissenschaft zu nennen, es war nur der Keim der Wissenschaft, welche entsteht, wenn das im einfachen Denken Erlangte - die Idee - auseinander gesetzt wird. Als Wissenschaft, die unmittelbar aus dem Denken hervorgeht, wird diese mit Recht *die erste* Wissenschaft heißen, und gleichwie sie selbst nur die auseinandergezogene Idee ist, *so* ist auch das, was sie *erzeugt*, dasselbe Denken, welches in der dialektischen Begründung thätig gewesen.⁴⁶⁸

areas of philosophy (see p. 17), discusses pure thinking as that very basic level thinking according to which the thought inductively extracts its own principles of operation from itself (see pp. 123-126) and whose basic law is the law of non-contradiction. It is, thus, thinking about thinking, which is concerned with the discovery of principles with the aid of a basic law of thought. Furthermore, pure thought fails insofar as it does have a presupposition – namely the law of non-contradiction, which, for Krüger, is what the potencies constitute through their moments (see p. 126 and 130).

468 SW XI, 364-365. English: “The principle for itself, not only to be had through that which has being, but free from that which has being, is no longer a question of pure thinking, and thus can be only a question of that which transcends immediate thinking, of scientific thinking. That which has previously been found in pure thinking now itself becomes object of thinking, and in this sense the thinking which transcends the simple and immediate thinking could well be called thinking about thinking, but not, as misunderstood by those who did not want to begin with thinking itself, but with thinking about – naturally fully empty – thinking. With the principle, as it is in pure thinking, i.e. held back away from that which has being, we could *not*, as they say, *begin*, for it is to us not *as* a principle. The attraction, however, which that which has being exercises on it, rests on the entire non-self-being of this latter (that which has being). In order for us to have the principle free from it, that which has being must be lifted from merely potential, hylic being, i.e. relative non-being: the sheer *potency* of self-being which is in it, posited into an actuality, independent from principle in its action. If the real that has *thus* become independent of the principle nevertheless seems to be powerless against the principle (at first only against that which is next above it, but then against the principle), as in need of it and subject to it at the end, *thus* the principle also appears as that which is victorious also over all other actuality, and hence actual *in itself*, i.e. *as* principle. This way, the previously purely noetic (dialectical) result is inverted in a process, and on the way of thinking, pulled apart towards *science*, it reaches what the simple immediate thinking could not attain. For what is found in pure thinking was not to be called science; it was only the germ of science, which arises when that which is attained in simple thinking – the idea – is pulled apart and examined. As science which

This long and somewhat confusing quote (for instance, why does Schelling call thinking about thinking “scientific thinking”, “wissenschaftliches Denken”?) nevertheless leads one to some conclusions: first of all, this “scientific thinking” is to take up the principle – the one discovered by sheer pure thought⁴⁶⁹ – out of this pure thought and reflect on thinking, yet not as a pure thinking about pure thinking, for in that case both would be fully empty, but in actuality, where the principle truly first becomes a principle, as it becomes active in this actuality. Although pure thinking and negativity are important elements of philosophical science, they are nevertheless problematic insofar as pure thinking can, without extending its domain towards existing objects, stay within the limits of pure thinking itself, thinking about thinking. This pure thinking remains at the level of the absolutely universal⁴⁷⁰ and separates – just like the examples of abstraction, which we have addressed in the previous chapter – ideas from all actuality. There is no place for such a clear-cut separation in a full-fledged philosophy, since such an abstraction only gives us the knowable, not the actually known. From this distinction between the knowable and the known we can extract a more refined definition of the positive and the negative philosophies, in order to then demonstrate that the *Potenzenlehre* belongs in one just as it does in the other. To this we will turn ourselves next.

I. Positive Philosophy, Negatively Defined

By making the distinction between positive and negative philosophy in the *Begründung der Positiven Philosophie* lectures, Schelling reintroduces an idea that constantly resurfaces in his work – that of philosophy as a double series, the last one he happens to approach philosophy with (in previous writings these were first dogmatism and criticism, then transcendental philosophy and *Naturphilosophie*, however there is no correspondence between those earlier series and the distinction positive-negative philosophy, since Schelling claims that everything that he has done before his “late” philosophy is to be classified under negative philosophy.)⁴⁷¹ The question of interrelation between the positive and the negative philosophies raises itself

always emanates from thinking, this can be rightly called the *first* science, and similarly it is only the idea pulled apart, *thus* also what it *generates* is the same thinking which has been active in dialectical grounding.”

469 On pure thinking, which is apparently abstract, deductive and mathematical, see XI, 359 or SW XI, 361, where it is shown that pure thought is therefore the operation of pure reason.

470 Schelling gives the example of mathematics as pure thinking (SW XI, 377-378): “Die Mathematik hat keine Usia, weder im Allgemeinen noch im Einzelnen. Nicht im Allgemeinen: denn sie hat überhaupt kein Ziel, kein Letztes, und scheint keine geschlossene, sondern eine ihrer Natur nach grenzenlose Wissenschaft zu seyn, ein Mangel, den schon Proklos eingesehen zu haben scheint und auf seine Weise zu heben sucht. Nicht im Einzelnen: sie kennt kein Dieses (kein τὸδε τι), sie beschäftigt sich nicht mit diesem Dreieck, sondern mit dem allgemeinen.” English: “Mathematics has no Usia, neither in general, nor in particular. Not in general: for it has no *goal* at all, no telos; it is not a closed science, but a science unlimited according to its nature: a deficiency which already Proclus seems to have penetrated and sought to cancel in his own way. Not in particular: it knows no This (kein τὸδε τι), it does not concern itself with this triangle, but with the general”.

471 Both philosophies in a double series are sound, but they approach their problematic from different angles and take different approaches.

particularly sharply, not in the least because Schelling himself leaves us with an incomplete answer at best, but also because it brings to hand the entire issue of the direction post-Kantian philosophy should take for him.⁴⁷² As such, Schelling's argument for the importance of constructing a positive philosophy is an argument for the need to engage in a new post-Kantian ontology, and do so in light of treating the negative critical philosophy as a discipline antecedent to such an ontology. In what follows, I will address the relationship between positive and negative philosophies, starting from the identity of what from the standpoint of the negative is the infinite potency of being, the content of reason's infinite potency of cognition,⁴⁷³ and from the standpoint of the positive a real ground of existence. This identity generates a common point in the two philosophies, which further identifies the double series as double only for a Kantian transcendental subject situated at the standpoint of the negative.

As presented in the *Begründung*, the positive-negative philosophy distinction is a distinction in both the subject and the method of philosophy. A negative philosophy adopts, as its method, setting limits for our thought. It operates in the domain of conceptual determination and, since it operates at a conceptual level, its instrument is reason.⁴⁷⁴ Schelling here accepts wholesale Kant's doctrine of thoroughgoing determination, which operates by attributing, to each subject

472 The lack of a clear answer about the relationship between the two philosophies on Schelling's part does occasionally produce strange readings of his work – for instance that of Lanfranconi, who claims that Being is not conceptualisable, but also – despite Schelling's claim that the positive philosophy is a metaphysical empiricism – also unreachable through experience. Lanfranconi's answer to the question of positive philosophy is that it is a philosophy of the will – see Lanfranconi, A.: "Inszenierung des Subjektivitäts". In Baumgartner, H.M., Jacobs, W.G. (Ed.): *Philosophie der Subjektivität? Zur Bestimmung des neuzeitlichen Philosophierens*, Band 2, Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt: 1993, pp. 480-489, here p. 484.

473 See the discussion of the infinite potency of cognition and the infinite potency of being in chapter I. To define them again: the faculty of reason has what Schelling calls an infinite potency of cognition, and the content of this potency is the infinite potency of being – the being's openness to be everything and accept every determination. See on this specifically SW XIII, 75 (*GPP*, pp. 141-142): "[die reine Potenz des Seins], eben weil bloße Potenz, in gewissem Sinne = nichts ist, ist die Vernunft allerdings voreingenommen, sie ist das gegen alles Offene, allem Gleiche (omnibus aequa), das nichts Ausschließende - aber was allein nichts ausschließt, ist die reine Potenz."

474 Schelling writes extensively on science of reason and the negative philosophy in the *Begründung der Positiven Philosophie* at SW XIII, 58-59 (*GPP*, pp. 128-129): "Also wenigstens in Bezug auf alles, was in der Erfahrung vorkommt, kann es nicht Sache der Vernunftwissenschaft seyn, zu beweisen, daß es existirt; sie würde etwas Ueberflüssiges thun. Was existirt, oder bestimmter, was existiren werde, (denn das aus dem Prius abgeleitete Seyende verhält sich gegen dieses – das Prius – als ein Zukünftiges; vom Standpunkt dieses Prius aus kann ich also fragen, was seyn werde, was existiren werde, wenn überhaupt etwas existirt) – dieß ist Aufgabe der Vernunftwissenschaft, dieß läßt sich a priori einsehen, aber daß es existirt, folgt daraus nicht, denn es könnte ja überhaupt nichts existiren. Daß überhaupt etwas existire, und daß insbesondere dieß Bestimmte, a priori Eingesehene in der Welt existire, kann die Vernunft nie ohne die Erfahrung behaupten." And at SW XIII, 82-83 (*GPP*, pp. 146-147): "Die alte Metaphysik glaubte die Existenz Gottes rational beweisen zu können, bewiesen zu haben, sie war insofern rationaler Dogmatismus, wie Kant sich ausdrückt, oder, wie ich mich umgekehrt ausdrücken will, positiver Rationalismus. Dieser nun wurde durch Kant so zersetzt, daß er fortan als unmöglich erscheint, wie denn heutzutage selbst solche Theologen, die gern überall nach Anhaltspunkten greifen, bei der alten Metaphysik keine Hülfe mehr suchen. Aber indem jener positive Rationalismus zersetzt wurde, war eben damit ein reiner Rationalismus in Aussicht gestellt – ein reiner, den wir aber nicht etwa den negativen nennen werden; denn dieß würde den positiven als einen möglichen voraussetzen, aber es gibt keinen positiven Rationalismus seit Kant. Rationalismus kann nur negative Philosophie seyn, und beide Begriffe sind völlig gleichbedeutend."

and for each predicate, either the predicate itself or its opposite. The list of known predicates is the limit, actuality or being are not included in this “laundry list” of predicates, and the transcendental ideal is the regulative ideal (see chapter I for more detail on this).

The source of negative philosophy is thus in no way experience: Sie “[gelangt] sich aus zu allem Seyn [...] und [nimmt] nichts mehr bloß aus der Erfahrung auf[...].”⁴⁷⁵ This does not mean that negative philosophy fully disregards experience, but merely that it does not take experience to be its authoritative source. It concerns itself with only that which is possible and not necessarily actual, since reason cannot know that something really is in actuality; it is only able to know what it could be. The kind of statement a negative philosophy is able to make, though, is a statement which goes along the lines of “x is/is not intelligible”. It provides criteria of intelligibility, rooted in *what* a thing is. With regards to the subject – it being a philosophy of reason – negative philosophy gives us conceptual knowledge about things, i.e., *what* they are – no more, no less than their essences. It, taken alone, cannot tell us *whether* things are and does not concern itself with the things’ coming into being. Furthermore, it is not concerned with the becoming of things, or even with individual things, but only with the universal,⁴⁷⁶ for to consider individual things is to look at them in a respect that deals with their existence – something which is impossible in the case of negative philosophy, which sticks only with what is possible, and not with actual existence:

Wäre die Wissenschaft Wissenschaft des bloßen Seyenden, d. h. des schlechthin Allgemeinen, oder der Idee, wie sie jetzt sagen, ohne sonderlich zu wissen, was sie sagen, so könnte sie nie über das potentielle Wissen hinauskommen, zum actuellen Wissen gelangen; denn das zu Grund Liegende, die Materie alles Allgemeinen ist – Dynamis, Potenz.⁴⁷⁷

Schelling is following Kant here; being is not a concept and thus is not discoverable by reason. It doesn’t really matter for the proceedings of reason whether they have as their objects things which exist in the world, or mere abstract entities, which have their existence only as concepts, notions and ideas. The negative philosophy is thus a kind of abstraction (according to the definition of abstraction which I have clarified in chapter III) – it consists of a cut, containing a break at the level of the idea.

475 SW XIII, 57. The English has, at *GPP*, p. 128: “[It] from within itself reaches out to all being and no longer assimilates anything just from experience”.

476 A wonderful example can be found at in SW XIII, 59 (*GPP*, p. 130): “Daß eine Pflanze überhaupt ist, ist nichts Zufälliges, wenn nämlich überhaupt etwas existirt: es ist nicht zufällig, daß es überhaupt Pflanzen gibt, aber es existirt ja keine Pflanze überhaupt, es existirt nur diese bestimmte Pflanze, an diesem Punkte des Raums, in diesem Moment der Zeit.”

477 SW XI, 378. English “If science were a science of merely that which has being, i.e. the purely universal, or the idea, as they say now, without knowing particularly, what it says, it could never come out of potential knowledge and reach actual knowledge, for that which lies in the ground, the matter of all universal is Dynamis, potency.”

A positive philosophy, on the other hand, is that philosophy which does not limit itself to the conceptual essences of things, but is rooted in their existences. It is able to tell us *that* things are. It is fundamentally historical, being able to trace the genetic emergence of the things it thinks. It is not limited to the consideration of the possibilities or impossibilities of things (“wie es sein kann, wenn es ist” – how it can be, if it is),⁴⁷⁸ but extends itself to the experience of the actual:

Daß dem reinen Subjekt (– A) nichts voraussetzen [ist], wird nicht bewiesen, man muß es erfahren. Erfahren, sage ich. [...] Denn allerdings gibt es auch solche, die von dem Denken wie einem Gegensatz aller Erfahrung reden, als ob das Denken selber nicht eben auch eine Erfahrung wäre. Man muß wirklich denken um zu erfahren, daß das Widersprechende nicht zu denken ist. Man muß den Versuch machen, das Uneinbare zumal zu denken, um der Nothwendigkeit inne zu werden, es in verschiedenen Momenten, nicht zugleich zu setzen, und so die schlechthin einfachen Begriffe zu gewinnen. Wie es zwei Arten von Induction gibt, so auch zweierlei Erfahrung. Die eine sagt, was wirklich und was nicht wirklich ist: diese ist die insgemein so genannte; die andere sagt, was möglich und was unmöglich ist: diese wird im Denken erworben. Als wir die Elemente des Seyenden suchten, wurden wir nur durch das im Denken Mögliche und Unmögliches bestimmt. Es stand nicht in unserm Belieben, welche Momente des Seyenden und in welcher Ordnung wir sie aufstellten, sondern es galt, mit dem Denken dessen, was das Seyende ist, wirklich zu versuchen, und also zu erfahren, was als das Seyende gedacht werden kann, insbesondere was das *primum cogitabile* ist. Das Denken ist also auch Erfahrung.⁴⁷⁹

The experience of positive philosophy is what Schelling, in the above quote, refers to as that experience which tells us what is actual and what is not, as opposed to that which tells us what is possible and what is not, which is the experience of thinking. Positive philosophy is precisely the thinking, which is grounded in that first kind of experience (in the *Grounding*,

478 *Verständnis der Potenzenlehre*, p. 116. Also see on this point Müller-Bergen in *Schellings Potenzenlehre*, p. 283.

479 SW XI, 326. English: “That nothing is presupposed before the pure subject (-A) is not proven; one is to experience it. Experience, I say. [...] For indeed there are also such people who speak of thinking as an opposite to all experience, as if thought itself was not precisely also a kind of experience. We must actually think in order to learn, that the opposite is not to be thought. We must particularly make the attempt to think the non-unifiable in order to grow aware of the necessity of not positing it in different moments, but simultaneously, and thus acquire simple concepts. Just as there are two kinds of induction, there also are two kinds of experience. The one says what is actual and what is not actual: this is generally called by its name; the other says what is possible and what is impossible: it is acquired in thought. As we sought the elements of being, we were only determined through the possible and impossible in thinking. It was not up to our whim which moments of that which has being and in which order we set up, but it rather was the matter of, with the thought of what being is, to actually try and thus learn what can be thought as being, especially what the *primum cogitabile* is. Thinking is thus also experience.”

See also SW X, 233-234, where Schelling further stresses that abstraction means “daß vorerst das Seyn ausgeschlossen bleibe, nicht in Betracht komme” (that for now being remain excluded, not coming into consideration) and remarks that through this abstraction one can mistakenly turn the knowing into being (of course not in actuality), and that one cannot ultimately separate the knowing from being – “[man kann] das Erkennende nicht von dem Seyn abscheiden”. We need to remember, that in order to not separate knowing from being, we need to begin with being and not try to achieve being through pure reason.

Schelling calls it “metaphysical empiricism” – “metaphysische[r] Empirismus”),⁴⁸⁰ although it also cannot be merely an empiricism in the usual sense this word has been historically used – “[sie] schwerlich bloßer Empirismus seyn [könnte], in dem Sinn, wie er meist gedacht wird”.⁴⁸¹ According to Ewertowski’s analysis of positive philosophy, it is an empiricism in the sense that it approaches experience – “[sie] geht [...] auf Erfahrung zu.”⁴⁸² Ewertowski writes:

Bei dieser Erfahrung handelt es sich nun aber nicht nur um die elementare Erfahrung, daß wir existieren und eine Welt ist. Es handelt sich auch nicht um eine bloße Reihe von bestimmten Zügen im Sosein der erfahrenen Welt, die das zuvor gedanklich Entwickelte bestätigen. Die Erfahrung auf die wir hier zugehen ist, wie Schelling sagt, „nicht eine gewisse, sondern die gesammte Erfahrung von Anfang bis zu Ende Was zum Beweis mitwirkt, ist nicht ein Theil der Erfahrung, es ist die ganze Erfahrung.”⁴⁸³

Positive philosophy therefore can follow the emergence of objects that are being thought, within the framework of a constant developing whole, hence it is historical in its essence. This “historicity” is however to be thought in a somewhat free sense: positive philosophy could, among other things, be a *Naturphilosophie*. Schelling writes, for instance: “Der Uebergang in die Naturphilosophie [kann] in der rein negativ sich haltenden Philosophie bloß hypothetisch geschehen”, and immediately remarks in what follows: “[D]adurch wird auch die Natur in der bloßen Möglichkeit erhalten, nicht als Wirklichkeit zu erklären versucht, was einer ganz andern Seite der Philosophie vorbehalten werden muß”.⁴⁸⁴ This “entirely different side of

480 Compare SW XIII, 113 (*GPP*, p. 168). This is especially apparent in Schelling’s description of the Aristotelian philosophy, which according to him is positive: “Aristoteles erscheint doch eben dadurch als der Schüler beider [Platons und Sokrates’], daß er sich vom bloß Logischen ab-, und dagegen ganz dem ihm erreichbaren Positiven, dem Empirischen im weitesten Sinne des Wortes, zuwendet, dem, bei welchem das Daß (daß es existirt) das Erste, das Was (was es ist) erst das Zweite und Secundäre ist.” (SW XIII, 100; *GPP*, p. 159) There are some pointers to the extent that the Schelling grounds the entire distinction between whatness and thatness on Aristotle’s philosophy, with the τί ἐστίν being whatness, and the τί ἦν εἶναι being thatness. For more on this, see Weidemann, H.: “Schelling als Aristoteles-Interpret”. In *Theologie und Philosophie* 54 (1979), pp.20-37.

481 SW XIII, 112. For English, see *Grounding* p. 167: “positive philosophy can hardly be just empiricism in the sense as it is most often conceived”.

482 Ewertowski, J.: *Die Freiheit des Anfangs und das Gesetz des Werdens. Zur Metaphorik von Mangel und Fülle in F. W. J. Schellings Prinzip des Schöpferischen*, Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt: 1999, p. 355, [zit. *Freiheit des Anfangs*].

483 Ibid. English: “This experience is about not only elementary experience, that we exist and the world is. It is also not about a mere series of determined moves in so-being of the experienced world, which confirms what was previous developed in thought. The experience to which we recourse here is, as Schelling says, “not just of a particular kind, but is the entirety of all experience from beginning to end. What contributes to the proof is not a part of experience, but all of experience.” – The Schelling quote is from SW XIII, 130-131 (*GPP*, p. 181). The whole in which positive philosophy operates is investigated in the next chapter.

484 SW XIII, 89. For English, see *GPP* p. 151 where Schelling talks about what happens “[i]n the transition to the philosophy of nature, which can occur only hypothetically in a philosophy that remains purely negative (whereby even nature is preserved in its sheer possibility, with no attempt to explain it as a reality, a task which must be reserved for an entirely different facet of philosophy)”. In the same text (SW XIII 133, *GPP*, pp. 183-184) Schelling also writes that the positive philosophy comes to nature out of its own subject: “Nehmen wir nun an, es fände sich unter dem Wirklichen der Erfahrung, zu welchem die positive Philosophie fortgeht, etwa auch die

philosophy” mentioned in this quote is precisely positive philosophy, which can philosophise about the actual unfolding of nature.

But the transition to the positive philosophy does not seem to be that simple: when the positive is put in contrast to the negative an issue raises itself: if the negative is conceptual and unable to access the non-conceptual existence of its object, would then the positive have to be non-conceptual in order to be the said philosophy of existence? The issue soon splits itself into multiples – what does it even mean for a philosophy to trace the emergence of things? What is the relationship between the positive and the negative; why – and whether really – would there have to be a double series of philosophies in the first place? In order to answer these questions, I will in the following zoom onto the relationship between the positive and the negative philosophies using conceptual tools taken from Schelling’s Berlin lectures *Begründung der Positiven Philosophie*, as well as Schelling’s conception of identity from the *Philosophischen Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit* in order to ultimately argue that the pure negative philosophy is fundamentally an abstraction in the sense described in the previous chapter and that the positive and the negative are, in essence, one philosophy, without this philosophy being doomed to suffer from a crippling inconsistency at that.

In clearing the ground for determining the relationship between the positive and the negative philosophies, it is somewhat ironically most convenient to initially approach the positive by negatively determining it, given Schelling’s clues to that regard. Schelling is very careful to differentiate this positive philosophy, which apparently deals with the non-conceptual side of things, from mysticism or intuitionism. It is first and foremost a philosophy – speculative thought with a definite form and method. A mysticism then, fails this first test – as a result of it, we do not obtain knowledge; thus it is not a philosophy at all, and a positive philosophy is definitely not mystical,⁴⁸⁵ for in mysticism the object of inquiry is made into an object of feeling. Schelling makes this point very clear in the *Begründung der positiven Philosophie*, where he insists that positive philosophy “cannot be identical with any of them [mystical teachings] since it claims to be a philosophy, and, thus, a science.”⁴⁸⁶ A positive philosophy

Offenbarung, so wird die positive Philosophie zu dieser von ihrem Prius aus nicht anders kommen, als wie sie auch zur wirklichen Natur, zum wirklichen Menschen, zum wirklichen Bewußtseyn kommt.”

485 In addition to not having a method, a philosophy based on mysticism is still a philosophy that seeks out “the divine essence” or “the essence of creation”, thus rendering it, for Schelling, negative. Anything ontotheological sets for itself a fixed absolute it strives to discover, one way or the other, and does not address the generation of things – that is enough to render it merely positivising, never positive.

486 *GPP*, p. 174. The German reads at SW XIII, 120: “Um so mehr wird es nothwendig seyn, auch vorläufig schon Aufschluß darüber zu geben, wie sich die von uns in Aussicht gestellte positive Philosophie zu diesen mystischen Lehren verhalte. Denn identisch kann sie doch mit keiner derselben seyn, schon darum, weil sie Philosophie, also Wissenschaft zu seyn behauptet, jene dagegen, wenn nicht alle auf speculativen Inhalt, doch alle auf wissenschaftliche Form und Methode verzichtet haben.”

has principles, just like any other science, and although Schelling writes that it does not begin from pure thinking (“[sie] überhaupt nicht vom reinen Denken ausgeht, [sondern...] von dem, was vor und außer allem Denken ist, also von dem Seyn”),⁴⁸⁷ so that it has a beginning completely different from that of the negative philosophy, it uses the same principles as the negative: “Es folgt hieraus, [aus der Tatsache, dass wir Prinzipien als „Stufen und Sprossen“ benutzen, um das philosophische Prius des vollkommenden Geistes zu erreichen (mehr hierüber später), und um am Ende zu entdecken, dass diese Prinzipien aus dem Prius *heraus* folgen – DK] daß wenn die reinrationale Philosophie dem Vortrag der positiven Philosophie unmittelbar selbst vorausgeht, die letztere nicht erst die Principien des Seyns zu suchen hat, da sie ja in jener schon gegeben sind [...]”.⁴⁸⁸ The positive is to use, to its own benefit, the results reached through and by the properly conducted negative philosophy, specifically by taking over the principles of being that the negative discovers, those principles being nothing but the potencies.

So, the positive philosophy takes over the principles from the negative. We will see how this plays out in what follows, for now we can ascertain that the *Potenzenlehre* is indeed to provide the principles for both the positive and the negative philosophies.⁴⁸⁹ Schelling confirms such a reading in his *Andere Deduktion der Prinzipien der Positiven Philosophie*, where he, after he gives an account of the potencies a further time, writes the following:

Dieselben Potenzen, die sich uns in der negativen Philosophie als apriorische darstellten, und uns alles Concrete vermittelten, kommen hier (in der positiven) wieder, aber nicht als bloße Potenzen, d. h. nicht als solche, die dem Seyn vorausgehen, sondern die das Seyn, und zwar das als Wesen gesetzte Seyn, zu ihrer Voraussetzung, und dadurch zugleich zu ihrer unauflöselichen Einheit haben.⁴⁹⁰

Here we finally get our answer, namely that the potencies can be used in a positive philosophy – together with a further confirmation, that the positive philosophy is not a mysticism and not an intuitionism.

487 SW XIII, 126. For English, see *GPP*, p. 178: “If it does not start out from something that occurs in thought [im Denken Seyende], and, thus, in no way from pure thought, then it will start out from that which is before and external to all thought, consequently from being [Seyn], but not from an empirical being.”

488 SW XIII, 248f. English: “It follows from this [from the fact that we use principles as ‘stages and sprouts’ in order to reach the philosophical prius of the perfect spirit (more on this later) and in order to discover at the end that these principles follow from the prius – DK] that if purely rational philosophy is immediately antecedent to the account of the positive philosophy, the latter does not have to seek out principles of being initially, as those are already given in the first [...]”

489 Compare on this point *Freiheit des Anfangs*, pp. 241-242, especially footnote 292: “Das Prinzip liegt gleichermaßen der negativen wie der positiven Philosophie zugrunde und muß von den spezifischen Wegen der beiden Wissenschaften unterschieden werden.” English: “The principle lies at the foundation of both negative and positive philosophy in equal measure and must be distinguished from the specific paths of both sciences.”

490 SW XIV, 353-354. English: “These same potencies which have presented themselves to us in negative philosophy as apriori and mediated everything concrete to us come here (in the positive) again, but not as mere potencies, i.e. not as those that are antecedent to being, but which have being, even being posited as potency, as its antecedent, and therewith also as their indissoluble unity.”

Furthermore, neither is a positive philosophy some non-discursive contemplative affirmation of everything that exists. Someone who engages in positive philosophy does not sit there only to point at things – all things – and exclaim that they are, taken by their aesthetic appeal. That would not be speculative, and thus not engaging in philosophy either. The question here, moreover, is not a question of descriptive litanies or of some historical inventory drawn of all things that have ever existed. When it is said that positive philosophy is historical,⁴⁹¹ and thus can and needs to address what the negative by definition cannot – the real generation of things as they *were, are* and will *be*, it does not mean that a positive philosophy is a narrative about our pasts and futures which faithfully follows the chronological progression of occurrences and existences, reciting them as it were. A mere narration is not philosophical, for philosophy is a science, as Schelling tells us, and it has a method “whereas the others [*mysticism and the like*], if they have not dispensed with all speculative content, have nevertheless done so with all scientific form and method.”⁴⁹² Positive philosophy requires principles – the principles uncovered for it by the negative. Schelling makes the following clear in a footnote to the *Begründung*: a historical philosophy does not mean that it leaves all *a priori* principles and procedures behind or that it only has history as its object of study; it also does not mean that such a philosophy rests on a particular progression of philosophical developments (i.e. on a particular history of philosophy).⁴⁹³ It means furthermore that positive philosophy is in a

491 SW XIII, 125 (*GPP*, p. 177-178): “Aber der Gott einer wahrhaft geschichtlichen und positiven Philosophie bewegt sich nicht, er handelt. Die substantielle Bewegung, in welcher der Rationalismus befangen ist, geht von einem negativen Prius, d. h. von einem nichtseyenden aus, das sich erst ins Seyn zu bewegen hat; aber die geschichtliche Philosophie geht von einem positiven, d. h. von dem seyenden Prius aus, das sich nicht erst ins Seyn zu bewegen hat, also nur mit vollkommener Freiheit, ohne irgendwie durch sich selbst dazu genöthigt zu seyn, ein Seyn setzt, und zwar nicht sein eignes unmittelbar, sondern ein von seinem Seyn verschiedenes Seyn, in welchem jenes vielmehr negirt oder suspendirt als gesetzt, also jedenfalls nur mittelbar gesetzt ist.” See also SW XIII 132 (*GPP*, p. 182): “[I]ch sage nur, daß wenn einer z. B. den wirklichen Hergang, wenn er eine freie Welterschöpfung u. s. w. will, er dieses alles nur auf dem Wege einer solchen Philosophie haben kann.”

492 *GPP*, p. 174 or SW XIII, 121.

493 I quote the entire footnote in what follows based on its helpful and clear argumentation: “Ich habe auch sonst, doch nur in vorläufigen Erörterungen, positive und negative Philosophie wie geschichtliche und ungeschichtliche einander entgegengesetzt, und dabei erklärt, was diese Ausdrücke bedeuten; allein die Ausdrücke verbreiten sich, die Erklärungen kommen meist nicht über den nächsten Kreis hinaus. So wurde geschichtliche Philosophie verstanden, als sollte in ihr das Wissen unmittelbar aus dem geschichtlichen Stoff wie durch einen alchemischen Proceß gezogen und alles apriorische Verfahren aufgegeben werden. Andere meinten, es sey unter geschichtlicher Philosophie verstanden, was man sonst Philosophie der Geschichte nennt, und brachten damit die Weltalter in Verbindung, die sie willkürlich, ohne daß ein Grund dazu gegeben war, die vier Weltalter nannten. Ein anderer Mißverstand war, als sollte künftig statt der Philosophie nur noch eine genetische Entwicklung der Philosophie, die zu ihrer Grundlage die Geschichte der Philosophie hätte, statuiert und gelehrt werden. Ich muß meinen Zeitgenossen die Gerechtigkeit widerfahren lassen, daß sie mich hierbei wenigstens nicht durch zu große Erwartungen in Verlegenheit gesetzt haben. Wenn der Geometer aus der Natur des Dreiecks beweist, daß die Summe seiner Winkel zweien rechten gleich sey, so folgt dieß aus der Natur des Dreiecks ohne eine andere Bewegung als die meines Denkens: zwischen dem Gegenstand selbst und seiner Eigenschaft ist nichts in der Mitte als nur mein Denken; das Dreieck selbst geht in dieser Eigenschaft nicht etwa vorher, noch geht in ihm etwas vor, wodurch es diese Eigenschaft annähme. Das Dreieck ist nur seinem Begriff nach, d. h. es ist nur logisch eher als jene Eigenschaft. Wenn nun Spinoza jene geometrische Wahrheit als Beispiel braucht, um zu erläutern, wie nach seiner Meinung die einzelnen endlichen Dinge aus der Natur Gottes

certain sense *a priori* – namely insofar as it begins in the world with the world as a *Prius* and strives towards absolute spirit:

[I]n der wahrhaft objektiven [so nennt Schelling hier die positive – DK] Philosophie wird der vollkommene Geist vielmehr dadurch erwiesen, daß von ihm als prius zu seiner Folge, nämlich zu seinen Werken und Thaten als zum posterius, fortgegangen wird. In dem physikotheologischen Beweis wird die Welt zum prius des Beweises gemacht, Gott also zum posterius. Hier dagegen ist umgekehrt der vollkommene Geist das prius, von dem aus man zu Welt, zum posterius gelangt. Daraus ergibt und erklärt sich, was ich schon früher gesagt habe: die positive Philosophie sey in Ansehung der Welt Wissenschaft *a priori*, ganz von vorn anfangende, alles gleichsam in urkundlicher Folge, vom prius herleitend, in Ansehung des vollkommenen Geistes aber Wissenschaft *a posteriori*.⁴⁹⁴

To classify the positive philosophy as a historical philosophy means simply that the objects of such a philosophy are *historical objects* (and not necessarily history itself), that is, it has to do with things which move, develop, stand in chains of causes and effects.⁴⁹⁵ History can (and should) of course be one of those historical “things”, but it is only *one* of the objects of positive philosophy.⁴⁹⁶ Even revelation and even Christianity are themselves only some of the numerous objects of such a philosophy, according to Schelling. On revelation, for instance, he writes the following:

Nehmen wir nun an, es fände sich unter dem Wirklichen der Erfahrung, zu welchem die positive Philosophie fortgeht, etwa auch die Offenbarung, so wird die positive Philosophie zu dieser von ihrem Prius aus nicht anders kommen, als wie sie auch zur wirklichen Natur, zum wirklichen Menschen, zum wirklichen Bewußtseyn kommt. Die Offenbarung ist ihr daher nicht Quelle, nicht Ausgangspunkt, wie der sogenannten christlichen Philosophie, von der sie in dieser Hinsicht *toto coelo* verschieden ist. Die Offenbarung wird in ihr in keinem

folgen, nämlich ebenso unzeitlicher, ewiger Weise, so ist seine Erklärung der Welt wohl eine ungeschichtliche, und im Gegensatz mit ihr dagegen die christliche Lehre, daß die Welt die Wirkung eines freien Entschlusses, einer That sey, eine geschichtliche zu nennen. Der Ausdruck geschichtlich, von der Philosophie gebraucht, bezog sich also nicht auf die Art des Wissens in ihr, sondern lediglich auf den Inhalt desselben.” SW XIII, 138-139, *GPP*, pp. 186-187.

494 SW XIII, 249. English: “[I]n the truly objective [i.e. the positive – DK] philosophy, the perfect spirit is furthermore proved by that this philosophy proceeds from it as *prius* to its consequences, namely to its effects and deeds as to the *posterius*. In the physicotheological proof, the world is made into the *prius* of the proof, God to the *posterius*. Here, on the contrary, perfect spirit is the *prius*, from which we reach the world, the *posterius*. What I have already said earlier results from this and is explained by it: positive philosophy is, in relation to the world, a science *a priori*, beginning from the very beginning, with everything, as it were, derived from the *prius* in a documentary order; but in view of the perfect spirit it is science *a posteriori*.”

495 Compare. Schmied-Kowarzik, W.: *Existenz Denken. Schellings Philosophie von ihren Anfängen bis zum Spätwerk*. München: 2015, pp. 316-317. This view includes natural history. For a discussion of Schelling and natural history, see Knatz, L.: *Geschichte – Kunst – Mythos. Schellings Philosophie und die Perspektive einer philosophischen Mythologie*, Würzburg, 1999, pp. 108-112, [zit. *Geschichte – Kunst – Mythos*].

496 History is after all “Prozess und Abfolge von Potenzen” (Baumgartner, H. M.: “Vernunft im Übergang zu Geschichte. Bemerkungen zur Entwicklung von Schellings Philosophie als Geschichtsphilosophie.” In Hasler, L. (Ed.): *Schelling. Seine Bedeutung für eine Philosophie der Natur und der Geschichte. Referate und Kolloquien der Internationalen Schelling-Tagung Zürich 1979*, Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt: 1981, pp. 175-192, hier p. 182). See also Schulz, W.: “Die Vollendung des Deutschen Idealismus in der Spätphilosophie Schellings”. In *Studia Philosophica* 14 (1954) pp. 239-266, her p. 245 – the positive positive and negative philosophies according to Schulz do not designate two difference subject areas, but methods.

andern Sinne vorkommen, als in welchem auch die Natur, die gesammte Geschichte des Menschengeschlechts in ihr vorkommt; die Offenbarung wird auf sie keine andere Autorität ausüben, als die allerdings auch jedes andere Objekt auf die Wissenschaft ausübt, die sich mit ihm zu schaffen macht.⁴⁹⁷

In relation to Christianity, Schelling writes that although a complete full-fledged philosophy must consider Christianity as its object, and although no philosophy could emerge without the developments of historical Christianity, this merely underlines the obvious fact that philosophy is dependent on its history.⁴⁹⁸ Had the history of Christianity not occurred, according to Schelling, then there would have been no philosophy. Had there been no experience, there would also have been no philosophy, but it does not mean that every philosophy is an empiricism.

From the above we conclude that both mysticism and mere historical, narrative thought fail to be a philosophy. Furthermore, we discover, if we investigate the starting point of the positive philosophy – now in order to try and determine this starting point positively – that although Schelling calls the positive philosophy, in contrast to the negative, a “metaphysical empiricism”, the positive philosophy is no pure empiricism, but only relatively empirical, namely in opposition to the rationalism of the negative philosophy.

The reading of the negative-positive philosophy distinction I present here is on one hand broader, and on the other significantly more minimalistic than the generally common reading, according to which positive philosophy is taken to be the historical setting and becoming of a personal God. Let us take, for instance, the highly detailed reading of Markus Gabriel from his book *Der Mensch im Mythos* – the distinction between positive and negative philosophies only makes sense, according to Gabriel, within the framework of Schelling’s turn to the religious problematic and his concern with the question of revelation. The “fatal flaw” of the negative philosophy does not only lie in the fact that it attempts to determine things purely

497 SW XIII, 133. For English, see *Grounding*, p. 183: “Let us now assume that even something like revelation is found among the realities of experience to which positive philosophy advances. If this were so, positive philosophy could approach revelation no differently than it approaches real nature, real humanity, and real consciousness: namely, from and out of its prius. Revelation is thus neither its source nor its point of departure, as it is in the so-called Christian philosophy from which it is in this respect toto coele different. Revelation will be present within positive philosophy in no other sense than nature or the entire history of the human race is also present within it; revelation will exert on it no different authority than what every other object exerts on the science that deals with it.”

498 On religion and revelation, see SW XIII, 133-141 (*GPP*, p. 183-188), e.g.: “Obgleich ferner bereits so viel erhellt, daß diese [die positive – DK] Philosophie den Inhalt der Religion als ihren eignen hat, wird sie es doch ablehnen, sich selbst religiöse Philosophie zu nennen oder nennen zu lassen, denn es müßte alsdann die negative z. B. die irreligiöse genannt werden, damit würde dieser Unrecht geschehen, wenn sie gleich die Religion nur als Religion der absoluten Subjektivität, nicht als objektive oder gar als geoffenbarte enthalten kann.” (here p. 134 in German, 184 in English). Also see WA I 13-14, where philosophy of revelation is described as that philosophy, which makes its objects alive.

logically or to derive them from the absolute⁴⁹⁹ – for Gabriel, contemplation (including what he calls “Reflexion auf mystische Frömmigkeit und Kunst”)⁵⁰⁰ also belongs to the domain of negative philosophy. Remarkably, this is not merely because it contemplates being only in its relation to essence [Wesen] or idea (“[sie betrachte] das Sein immer noch in seiner Beziehung zum Wesen, d. h. zur Idee als dem Inbegriff aller Bestimmtheit”⁵⁰¹ or because it seeks that, which the prius to the empirical,⁵⁰² but it is also based on the fact that negative philosophy leads to negative theology. Negative philosophy, to wit, cannot ground the operations of our reason and our experience, because it is incapable of grasping a personal living dynamic “structure” that is God (which indeed is no longer a “structure”, but is a person⁵⁰³ in the truly Schellingian sense of the word) – that is, it cannot grasp a structure which requires itself as its own ground. Gabriel writes concerning this flaw:

[d]ie Aufgabe der positiven Philosophie als deszendenter Dialektik besteht darin, die regionalen Ontologien, d. h. für Schelling: Naturphilosophie und Bewußtseinsphilosophie in der *ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή* dem *actus purissimus* des göttlichen Seins zu begründen, um so das Ganze des Seienden in seiner Ge Gründtheit in seinem selbst grundlosen Grund ansichtig werden zu lassen.⁵⁰⁴

Gabriel here asserts that the positive philosophy is to unite the two sides of the previously mentioned Schellingian double series (*Naturphilosophie* and transcendental philosophy). The positive is to also, however, think God as a person, and hence follow the historical developments of the god-positing consciousness in human beings. It could well be said here that *Naturphilosophie* and transcendental philosophy can only develop within this god-positing consciousness, i.e. through human activity; in fact, this is practically trivial. But the problem of such a reading lies precisely in that it makes the unity of *Naturphilosophie* and transcendental philosophy stem from this human activity. Nature and the transcendental subject belong to the *same world* for Schelling; they are unified primarily through the fact that there is no ontological split between their domains, and only secondarily through some kind of human source. Gabriel’s reading of positive philosophy limits it, especially in light of Schelling’s repeated persistent claim that this philosophy does not have a particular topic, and above all is not a religious philosophy. It admittedly stands in a special relationship to God, and we will examine this relationship in the following chapter; however, it is to be expected

499 *MiM*, pp. 222.

500 *MiM*, pp. 352. English: “reflection on mystic piety and art”.

501 *MiM*, pp. 357. English: “it contemplates being still in its relation to essence, i.e. to idea as the sum of all determination.”

502 *MiM*, pp. 290.

503 *MiM*, pp. 276.

504 *MiM*, pp. 283. English: “[T]he task of positive philosophy as descending dialectic consists in grounding the regional ontologies, i.e. for Schelling: *Naturphilosophie* and philosophy of consciousness in the *ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή* to the *actus purissimus* of the divine being, in order to let the whole of existents become in their groundedness in their own groundless ground.”

that its relationship is not merely one to human god-positing consciousness, but to actual God. Gabriel's pithy summary of Schelling's objection to the negative philosophy, namely that it cannot grasp the phenomenon of personality – “[sie kann] grundsätzlich das Phänomen der Personalität nicht greifen”⁵⁰⁵ – is, however, extremely important and rings true. Negative philosophy conceives God as merely a logical or transcendental structure. Gabriel then proceeds to describe positive philosophy as follows:

[...D]ie positive Philosophie [ist] keine allgemeine positive Denkweise [...], die mit der Faktizität des Seins rechnet, anstatt alles reinrational deduzieren zu wollen. Dies wäre auch noch im Rahmen einer negativen Philosophie, also etwa einer neuplatonisch verstandenen Noologie möglich, die sich selbst in ihren nicht mehr geisthaften Einheitsgrund transzendiert, der nicht nur ein ontisches, sondern sogar ein absolutes Außerhalb ist.⁵⁰⁶

We can find an even more striking description of negative philosophy's position on personality in Marcela Garcia's article *Schelling's Late Negative Philosophy: Crisis and Critique of Pure Reason*: “[...] individuality thought in negative philosophy is a silhouette obtained negatively, a ‘person-shaped void.’”⁵⁰⁷

But to return to Gabriel's description of the positive philosophy: a philosophy which truly accounts for the facticity of being is to be called positive, because facticity depends on there being individuating powers, which are not only capable of individuating things “in principle” but also actually do *de facto* individuate and determine each thing. Such a power is not a transcendental principle, but God – the living, developing, personal God. I will approach this topic in more details in chapter V of this work, but the gist of the problematic of positive philosophy in relation to God, as I see it, is as follows: positive philosophy is precisely not merely god-positing and it also does not break the interconnection between being and essence⁵⁰⁸ – something which Gabriel seems to reproach the negative for. We will see in what follows that Schelling does not intend to carve up philosophy into two halves, despite the difference between the positive and the negative philosophies. Despite those differences, the two form only one philosophy proper. Gabriel writes on that point:

Schellings Spätphilosophie läßt sich nämlich nicht nur in negative Philosophie einerseits und positive Philosophie andererseits einteilen, wobei unter jener die Prinzipientheorie *in abstracto*, unter dieser aber ausschließlich die ausgeführten

505 *MiM*, pp. 362.

506 Ibid. English: “[T]he positive philosophy is no general positive way of thinking [...], which takes into account the facticity of being instead of deducing everything purely rationally. This would have still been possible within the framework of negative philosophy, for instance in a neoplatonically-understood noology, which transcends itself into its ground of unity, no longer spiritual, not an ontic, but even an absolute outside”.

507 García, M.: *Schelling's Late Negative Philosophy: Crisis and Critique of Pure Reason*, in *Comparative and Continental Philosophy*, 3/2, (2012), pp.141-164, here p. 160.

508 This relation would only be broken in mysticism, but a mysticism – and here I fully agree with Markus Gabriel – is a contemplative philosophy, hence negative.

konkret geschichtlichen Philosophie der Mythologie und der Offenbarung zu verstehen wären.⁵⁰⁹

However, before we investigate this unity and seek to understand how the positive and the negative are joined, we should discuss the concept of the unprethinkable in more detail, as this will prove invaluable to articulating the relationship between the two philosophies. It is to this that we turn now.

II. The Janus-faced Unconditioned

Schelling's critique of negative philosophy consists in that it only takes you up to a certain point, at which it faces its own limits and gets stuck in *aporia*. The negative's limit lies in thinking the infinite potential of being that lies at the heart of reason, so this limit is within reason.⁵¹⁰ To see how this functions within a specific negative philosophy, we shall once again take Kant's critical system as an example of such a negative – and Kant himself calls his enterprise negative in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.⁵¹¹ At the heart of the philosophical project of the *First Critique*, holding it together, is the transcendental ideal, which reason needs to ensure the systematic determination of appearances.⁵¹² However, as I have already extensively discussed in chapter I, Kant expresses the nature of this transcendental ideal ambivalently – because, indeed, it is of an ambivalent nature. Since the transcendental ideal is the source of determination, Kant treats it as the sum of all possible determinations. And yet, since it is the basis of determination rather than a mere sum, Kant corrects himself and changes its status to

509 *MiM*, pp. 283. English: "Schelling's late philosophy doesn't let itself be divided into negative philosophy on one side and positive philosophy on the other, where the first would designate the theory of principles *in abstracto* and the second exclusively the implemented concrete and historical philosophy of mythology and revelation."

510 See *SW XIII*, 165 or *GPP*, p. 205

511 See *CPR B xxiv* and the Transcendental Dialectic, for instance B671–673, where reason and its ideas are given only a "regulative" status, which in the Dialectic is for all purposes synonymous with negative.

512 See *Concluding Remarks to the Entire Antinomy of Pure Reason*: "As long as we, with our concepts of reason, have as our object merely the totality of the conditions in the world of sense, and what service reason can perform in respect of them, our ideas are transcendental still cosmological. But as soon as we posit the unconditioned (which is what is really at issue) in that which lies outside the sensible world, and hence in that which is outside all possible experience, then the ideas come to be transcendent; they do not serve merely to complete the empirical use of reason (which always remains an idea, never to be completely carried out, but nevertheless to be followed), rather they separate themselves entirely from it and make themselves into objects whose matter is not drawn from experience, and whose objective reality rests not on the completion of the empirical series but on pure concepts a priori. Such transcendent ideas have a merely intelligible object, which one is of course allowed to admit as a transcendental object, but about which one knows nothing; but for the assumption of such an object, in thinking it as a thing determinable by its distinguishing and inner predicates, we have on our side neither grounds of its possibility (since it is independent of all concepts of experience) nor the least justification, and so it is a mere thought-entity. Nevertheless, among the cosmological ideas, the one occasioning the fourth antinomy presses us to venture so far as to take this step. For the existence of appearances, not grounded in the least within itself but always conditioned, demands that we look around us for something different from all appearances, hence for an intelligible object, which which this contingency would stop." – *CPR B593-594*.

that of a ground of determination, antecedent to it, and thus indeterminable.⁵¹³ This is the side of the ideal which the negative critical philosophy cannot address: the ground is indeterminable and non-conceptual, thus it is not merely an idea, but a being – unprethinkable being, as identified by Markus Gabriel – “that whose determinate being (Dasein) is necessary for thought, that is, that which it would be impossible not to think.”⁵¹⁴ This identification – that of the transcendental ideal with unprethinkable being – is, as we have seen in Chapter I, central and crucial to understand Schelling’s late philosophy. However, negative philosophy cannot consider the unprethinkable being as *being*, hence it has, within the limits of this philosophy, to be considered as a transcendental structure. Within the negative philosophy, unprethinkable being cannot have the status of an existent, but merely that of the infinite potency of being as content of the infinite potency of cognition.⁵¹⁵ The potency of being corresponds to the transcendental demand that there be inexhaustible ungrounded pluripotent being outside reason, one which can be potentiated in many ways and in which the functions of reason are grounded. This is indeed a transcendental condition, albeit one which points beyond itself. It points towards that which, for Kant’s system, is a stumbling stone, and one which should be impossible at that: an absolute. Something greater than thought, inaccessible to the transcendental subject, which is nevertheless needed for conceptual determination. This is the negative’s highest point, that beyond which it cannot go. Granted, a purely negative philosophy cannot address the existence of things, but when it comes to the unprethinkable being, it cannot even address its essence, its whatness, because the unprethinkable is *unbedingt*, unconditioned, not a thing. In the middle of a rational philosophy, in the middle of the very faculty of reason, there sits a black hole inaccessible to it. However, reason demands the discovery of its ground; it cannot remain without its operations unified. This is where the negative ends and the positive begins; with a demand to uncover the ground of thought rooted in an unconditioned,⁵¹⁶ and if the negative ends with the unprethinkable being, then the positive must begin with it.

Schelling introduces the concept of the unprethinkable into his philosophy probably in the Erlangen lectures *Initia Philosophiae Universae*, in which the unprethinkable is equated with the Can.⁵¹⁷ The relation between the Unprethinkable and the Can (in the sense of the first potency -A, i.e. matter) remains also in the Schelling’s later writings, since the unprethinkable

513 CPR B606-607.

514 *Transcendental Ontology*, p. 65.

515 SW XIII, 64. “Da allem Erkennen ein Seyn entspricht, dem wirklichen Erkennen ein wirkliches Seyn, so kann der unendlichen Potenz des Erkennens nichts anderes als die unendliche Potenz des Seyns entsprechen, und dieß ist also der der Vernunft an- und eingeborene Inhalt.” For English, see *GPP*, p. 133.

516 SW XIII, 92. For English, see *GPP*, p. 153.

517 Bilda, A.: “Zur Dynamisierung des Anfangs in Schellings Erlanger Vorlesung von 1821”. Conference presentation in Odense, Denmark, at conference entitled “Das Problem des Anfangs” on 18.02.2016.

is previous to all other being, and all that which emerges against the backdrop of the unprethinkable.⁵¹⁸ In his text *Andere Deduktion der Prinzipien der positiven Philosophie* Schelling writes that God as Lord, as the actualised God, suspends its unprethinkable being “[Gott von Ewigkeit] sein unvordenkliches Seyn aufzuheben [sieht], allerdings nicht absolut es aufzuheben, aber es zu suspendiren”.⁵¹⁹ This suspension is exactly that to which the actualised God subjects his matter⁵²⁰ in the writings from around 1820, for instance in the *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*:

Aber wie der Mensch im Proceß seiner Selbstbildung oder Selbstbewußtwerdung das Dunkle, Bewußtlose in sich von sich ausschließt, sich entgegensetzt, nicht um es ewig in dieser Ausschließung, in diesem Dunkel zu lassen, sondern um dieses Ausgeschlossene, dieses Dunkle selbst allmählich zur Klarheit zu erheben, es hinaufzubilden zu seinem Bewußten, so schließt auch Gott das Niederere seines Wesens zwar von dem Höheren aus und drängt es gleichsam von sich selbst hinweg, aber nicht um es nun in diesem Nichtseyn zu lassen, sondern um es aus ihm zu erheben [...] Um Ihnen gleich eine weitere Aussicht zu eröffnen: Dieses untergeordnete Wesen, dieses Dunkle, Bewußtlose, was Gott beständig von sich, als Wesen, von seinem eigentlichen Inneren hinwegzudrängen, auszuschließen sucht, ist die Materie (freilich nicht die schon gebildete), und die Materie also nichts anderes als der bewußtlose Theil von Gott.⁵²¹

This similarity between the Unprethinkable and the Can (or matter) reminds us on one hand of the relationship between the Schellingian matter and the transcendental ideal, and on the other hand, of the relationship between matter and the transcendental object = X, which I have already elaborated on in the second chapter.⁵²² Within the framework of our cognition’s transcendental structures, both transcendental objects – X and the ideal – play a foundational

518 Jiří Černý also addresses this connection in his “Von der *natura naturans* zum ‚unvordenklichen Seyn““. This connection is too tight for him, since he claims that Unprethinkable being is identical to matter – this is what he calls late Schelling’s “materialism” (*Von der natura naturans*, pp. 138-139).

519 SW XIV, 350; English: “God seeks to sublimate his uprethinkable being, however not to sublimate it absolute, but to suspend it.” – I must here add that this formulation is further confirmation of the fact that “unprethinkable being” does not merely refer to the fact of being’s unprethinkability, but rather to being.

520 See also the *Weltalter*: “In diesem steten Wechsel von Ausgehen und Zurückgehen, Ausbreitung und Anziehung wird die Materie mehr und mehr zum äußern Typus des inwohnenden Geistes zubereitet, der, da er die gänzliche Einheit (die Negation aller Vielheit) nicht hervorbringen kann, die Einheit in dieser Vielheit zu behaupten, also ein System hervorzubringen, architektonisch zu wirken versucht. – SW VIII, 327-328 and *Ages of the World*, p. 95.

521 SW VII, 434-435. For English, see *Stuttgart Seminars*, pp. 207-208: “Yet just as the progressive self-formation and development of selfconsciousness involves man’s exclusion of the dark and unconscious [dimension] within himself, which he [now] opposes to himself-though not for the purpose of leaving it in this exclusion and darkness, but to progressively elevate this excluded and dark [dimension] to clarity and to transfigure (hinaufzubilden) it in the direction of his own consciousness-so God, too, excludes the inferior [dimension] of his essence from the superior one and expels it as it were from Himself [...] To offer you one further perspective, this subordinate, dark, and unconscious dimension that God, as essence, continually seeks to expel and exclude from His proper self is matter (although not yet formed matter); thus matter is nothing but the unconscious aspect of God.”

522 Very importantly, this similarity should by no means call us to think that pure Can and unprethinkable being are the same. Markus Gabriel makes this point very well in his *Mensch im Mythos*: “Das unvordenkliche Sein darf also nicht mit der ersten Potenz verwechselt werden, da diese als Potenz bereits in einem Vermittlungsprozeß begriffen ist.” - *MiM*, p. 203. English: “The unprethinkable being thus is not to be confused with the first potency, since the latter is, as potency, already grasped by a process of mediation.”

role in the process of determining appearances: the object X is the matter of determination, so “Can” in the sense that it is in itself *nothing* and can accept all possible determinations in judgement. The transcendental ideal is the sum of all possible determinations and is in a certain sense also “Can” – it too can accept all possible determinations, although in the sense that it is simultaneously the sum and the ground of all determinations and predicates. The object X is pure and undetermined, a formless something to which all determinations are external. The ideal is also undetermined, even indeterminable, and yet it is not some shapeless indefiniteness, but one containing the principles of thoroughgoing determination, i.e. determinations are not added to it from the outside, but are grounded – just like the entire predicative structure of our thinking – in the ideal. The first potency (matter, the Can within the *Potenzenlehre*) and the unprethinkable are similarly connected: both are “Can”, but they are two kinds of Can. The first potency, matter, is the empty can, to which all determination is external. It could also in no way be called a “being”, since it is merely that which has being and in that sense it *is* only relatively, only as a part of a potency triad. The unprethinkable, in contrast, *is being*, and it is being outside and before any kind of separation into potency triads. The first is indeterminate, but paradoxically also determinate as pure indeterminacy; the second is indeterminate, but posited as that “horizon” in which everything appears.

Finally, it is important to remember for the purposes of the potency dialectic that the potencies taken merely as a structure *are* not, and it is the condition of the unprethinkable that introduces being into the potencies. In other words, it is thanks to the unprethinkable being that the functional roles discussed in chapter II are rooted in being. Markus Gabriel describes this process of rooting as follows:

Wir hatten gesehen, daß auch das Subjekt-Objekt noch nicht das Seiende sein kann, das die philosophierende Vernunft seit jeher sucht. Weiterhin hatte sich gezeigt, daß nicht einmal das Ganze der Momente nicht im emphatischen Sinne *ist*, sondern lediglich den Stoff zu allem möglichen Sein bereithält, indem es seine Struktur-momente *a priori* konfiguriert. Zwar sind die Potenzen die Prinzipien aller möglicher Bestimmtheit. Dabei geht ihnen aber der Charakter des Selbstseins (der Aseitität) ab, indem sie nur in ihrer Vermittlung das Ganze des Seienden sind. Sie sind dabei allgemein in dem Sinne, daß sie sich in jedem beliebigen Seienden als seine Konstituentien finden lassen.⁵²³

It is now crucial to ask what becomes of the unprethinkable within the problematic of the positive and negative philosophy. The negative philosophy ends with the unprethinkable as its

523 *MiM*, 186. English: “We have seen that even the subject-object can still not be the existent, which the philosophising reason has sought ever since. Furthermore it has turned out that the entirety of moments *is* not at all in an emphatic sense, but merely holds clear the matter for all possible being, in that it configures its structure-moments *a priori*. To wit, potencies are principles of all possible determinedness. Thereby, however, their character of self-being (aseity) falls off, in that they are only in their mediation of the who of existents. They are universal in the sense, that they are to be found in every existent as its constituents.”

own limit, unattainable except negatively. Since positive philosophy begins where the negative ends, it is logical to suppose that the unprethinkable plays a role within positive philosophy distinct from, but also related to that in the negative. Within the negative philosophy, the unprethinkable is a transcendental structure, precisely as it is described above by Markus Gabriel: as a horizon of determination. However, Schelling writes of the unprethinkable *Being*; the negative horizon of determination, such as it presents itself within the negative philosophy, cannot be being. The unprethinkable is a kind of double-sided, double faced being, so to speak, which connects the two philosophies together. Schelling investigates the transition from the negative philosophy to the positive through the Unprethinkable in his text *Andere Deduktion der Prinzipien der positiven Philosophie*. We begin with the unconditionally existing in order to find that principle which stands above all – “[um] das über allem stehende Princip zu finden”.⁵²⁴ This principle is, within the framework of the negative philosophy, the principle of the determination of everything, given through reason: the infinite potency of being or the infinite can-being.⁵²⁵ As we have already established via the examination of Kantian philosophy in the first chapter, the unprethinkable taken thus is the ground of the process of thinking and cognition for Schelling, and the background against which conceptual determination is accomplished, exactly as it happens against the transcendental ideal in Kant.

In contrast to negative philosophy, the positive philosophy is a philosophy of existence, and for it to begin with the unprethinkable is for it to posit its existence. The negative already ends up faced with the existence of the unprethinkable without being able to posit it, as the negative philosophy has no methodological right to posit the existence of anything. As seen from the standpoint of the negative, the unprethinkable is an unconditioned for-thought, one that is consequent on thought’s existence. Although the unprethinkable is a condition of conceptual determination and, therefore, a condition of thought, its essence is contingent on thought: it might as well not exist, if thought hadn’t existed,⁵²⁶ and it only becomes what it is – namely, the ground of determination – in consequence of thought. In other words, the unprethinkable generates thought, but it is not until thought is generated that it is the unprethinkable. Even its name testifies to this: unprethinkable [*unvordenkliche*] is that before which nothing can be thought, and such a stance can be taken towards it only after thought becomes possible. Positive philosophy, on the other hand, takes a different stance towards this unconditioned, affirming its existence as something which does not depend on thought, but as something

524 SW XIV, 337.

525 As for the determination of everything that is, see Markus Gabriels *Transcendental Ontology*, 69ff. On the infinite potency of being, see SW XIII 64-65 and SW XIV, 339.

526 See Markus Gabriel’s *Transcendental Ontology*, especially the essay “Contingency or Necessity? Schelling versus Hegel”.

which is the ground of all, that which roots the potencies for the production of novelty in being.⁵²⁷ Instead of something which is the sum of all determinations, in the positive philosophy we get something which is actually the ground of all determinations, their root and source. If we put this requirement together with the fact that positive philosophy is the philosophy that can address the existence of a personal God, it is hard to avoid the conclusion, that the positivised Unprethinkable has a close relation to God, albeit not being God in the usual sense of the word, but being rather reminiscent of how, for Kant, the transcendental ideal and God (as an idea) are the same:

Allein auch für Kant ist ja zwischen dem Inbegriff aller Realität (der Materie der Einschränkung) und Gott kein wirklicher Unterschied, jener hat bloß für unsere Vorstellung sich zu einem durchgängig bestimmten Ding, einem Individuum, zusammengezogen.⁵²⁸

Schelling positivises this, making God in the positive philosophy into the ground of all determinations. The meaning of this will be explored in the next chapter – for now we have to set aside the topic of how exactly God grounds determinations and stay with unprethinkable being. For now it is also important to keep in mind that for positive philosophy unprethinkable being is something which precedes all possibility, the *Prius*, “das allem Denken zuvor [ist], das unbedingt Existirende”.⁵²⁹ In negative philosophy, due to the limited nature of the activity of pure reason,⁵³⁰ the corresponding place of unprethinkable being is occupied by its negative idea. It is as if the unprethinkable with which the negative ends and that with which the positive beings are two faces of a Janus-like unprethinkable, a two-faced unconditioned. Markus Gabriel sees only one face of this “Janus” when, as was pointed out in chapter I, he reduces the unprethinkable merely to the fact “that thought is initially ungrounded”.⁵³¹ To recall: in chapter I, I have raised the question of whether “unprethinkable being” is not better read as referring to the sheer fact of being’s unprethinkability, and not to being. This, I have pointed out, is hard to reconcile with Schelling’s *Andere Deduktion*, which states plainly that unprethinkable being is the being that precedes thought. We can here see, however, that it is not fully false to take unprethinkable being to mean “the fact of being’s unprethinkability”:

527 The beginning of the positive has potency and actuality inverted: its actuality comes before its potency – and thus before all other potencies. See SW XIII, 156.

528 SW XI, 287. English: “For Kant, too, the sum of all reality (matter of limitation) and God do not actually differ, so that each pulls itself together into a thoroughly determined thing, an individual, only for our representation”.

529 SW XIV, 337 – In the *Andere Deduktion* Schelling begins with the unconditioned existent and proceeds from there to the *idea* of the unconditioned existent, although the unprethinkable precedes the concept and so is not determined through it (“[ist] ein allem Begriff zuvorgekommenes, also nicht durch den Begriff bestimmtes”) – in Schelling’s philosophy we do indeed begin with that which exists to only then belatedly reach the idea of the existent, only to face the need to free ourselves from this idea of the existent (so, from negative philosophy) and confront ourselves with the existent once again.

530 Unprethinkable being is that being which corresponds to the infinite potency of being: see SW XIV, 340-342.

531 *Aarhus I*, p. 77.

this fact is precisely what unprethinkable being becomes in negative philosophy. To restate: negative philosophy operates in the foreground of the fact that being precedes thought and that thought cannot fully determine being. This fact is discussed in great and astute detail in Gabriel's *Aarhus Lectures*, where this negative side of the unprethinkable being, namely the fact of being's unprethinkability, is described as logical space.⁵³² Logical space, in the *Aarhus Lectures*, plays the same role that unprethinkable being, already closely tied to the notion of logical space, has played for Gabriel's analysis of Schelling in *Transcendental Ontology* – it is the determinability of everything.⁵³³

With such an approach towards the unprethinkable as is manifest on the pages of the *Aarhus Lectures*, it is unsurprising that Gabriel is led to claim that “unprethinkable being only occurs in negative philosophy and that it is employed as a therapeutic tool in a dialogue between the positive philosopher and the projects of using pure logic in order to understand human agency in the context of a society”.⁵³⁴ In the Aarhus lectures, Gabriel refines his view of the positive and negative philosophies from *Mensch im Mythos* discussed above, and proceeds to read the two philosophies in a more interesting and fruitful way. The negative philosophy is now that which views itself as the articulation of the relation between thought and being, one which nevertheless remains in constant awe as to the fact of this very relation.⁵³⁵ Positive philosophy, on the other hand, is that philosophy which does not begin with a chasm between thought and being, but rather sees human beings in their historicity – along with their actions, their art, their norms and values – as part of its world-picture, with all these human elements intimately intertwined with being, no longer cold, anonymous and inaccessible. The centre of this positive philosophy, for Gabriel, is “mythological consciousness”, and not at all unprethinkable being – the god(s)-positing movement of consciousness is what grounds historically the self-determination of human beings.⁵³⁶ This is an excellent account, one with

532 See *Aarhus II*, p. 125, which equates the transcendental ideal with logical space and yet puzzlingly claims that logical space is “an entity”.

533 See *Transcendental Ontology* pp. 70-71: “Unprethinkable being should thus be understood as the actuality of all possibility, that is, all determinability prior to its becoming anything determinate as such [...] For everything that exists is something and is therefore determinate. That anything whatsoever exists cannot be justified with reference to a determinate ground and therefore cannot be grounded in any manner whatsoever. Thus there is no ratio determinans for the existence of logical space: that a predicative ambience exists in which we can acquire knowledge is a fact that can neither be grounded in nor excluded from unprethinkable being. Logical space could have not come to be: it is sensu stricto contingent, because its other, that which it would be were it otherwise, that is, the eternally indeterminate, cannot be a priori ruled out.

534 Gabriel, M.: “Aarhus Lectures, Fourth Lecture: The Very Idea of a Philosophy of Mythology in Contemporary Philosophy”. In *SATS – North European Journal of Philosophy*, 2016, vol. 17(2), pp. 115-144, p. 116.

535 Ibid., p. 117.

536 Ibid., pp. 118-119. Interestingly, it seems that at this stage, Gabriel also construes the positive philosophy to be the practical, and while this philosophy no doubt is meant to have a vast practical dimension, insofar as it is concerned with the history of its objects, one wonders whether an identification of the positive with the practical is not premature and whether positive philosophy does not abolish the entire distinction

which I am completely in agreement – it is indeed only the positive philosophy that can give us an account of the genealogical development of self-determination and self-consciousness; it indeed is the only philosophy that can give us the genealogical development of *anything*, insofar as historicity is so deeply embedded in its approach and so blatantly absent from the approach of the negative. The positive philosophy precisely traces and follows the generation and effects of its objects, treating them as dynamic. I even agree with Gabriel’s claim that the unprethinkable being is not the most important element of positive philosophy and not its great breakthrough, so to speak – in that respect, Gabriel is fully right to criticise the traditional reconstruction of the relation between positive and negative philosophies (he cites Manfred Frank and Walter Schultz as examples of such a reconstruction),⁵³⁷ and yet it is not warranted to claim that unprethinkable being is present only as an element of the negative philosophy. It read as the principle of unprethinkability of being is definitely only there in the negative, but a negative, regulative fact of being’s unprethinkability without it being an ontologically necessary fact is not enough to ground thinking in being – we have seen this in chapter I of this work. Positive philosophy, too is a thinking, and yet a thinking rooted in being. This rootedness is accomplished through the acknowledgment that being – actual historical being – is, indeed, prior to thinking and not fully amenable to conceptual capture, that being actually is unprethinkable. The fact that being is unprethinkable implies there is unprethinkable being – this is Schelling’s meaning with regards to this term, no more and no less. Remarkably, Gabriel’s earlier book *Mensch in Mythos* does a more Schellingian job of discussing the unprethinkable being, tying it to the “ground of everything”⁵³⁸ [Grund des Ganzen], that which accidentally exists, but is absolutely necessarily thought (the accidentally necessary existent), the result of God’s activity.⁵³⁹ The position this text takes is close to this Gabriel’s *Mensch im Mythos* position, and it will be further elaborated on in the next chapter, along with the relation between the unprethinkable being and God.

In light of the discussed, and especially in light of the textual evidence from *Andere Deduktion*, I will hold fast to the duplicity of unprethinkable being. Due to its dual nature, I will in what follows reserve the expression “unprethinkable *being*” for the unprethinkable as it stands within positive philosophy, in the sense of an actually existing unprethinkable unconditioned. For the counterpart of unprethinkable being from within negative philosophy, namely the fact of being preceding thinking, this “infinite potency of being”, I will use the

between theory and practice, by viewing nothing as solely theoretical, and by not restricting its domain to any specific topic.

537 Ibid., p. 116.

538 See *MiM*, p. 203.

539 For more on this, see *MiM*, pp. 209-210, and 309, although Gabriel does already in *MiM* call unprethinkable being the “negative absolute” (p. 278).

expression “unprethinkability of being”. This will then refer to the fact that being precedes and exceeds thought – the “unprethinkability of being” I have focused on in chapter I, which as it turns out, was only considering unprethinkable being from the standpoint of negative philosophy – hardly surprising, as it had dealt with Kant.

To summarize, then: reason is the infinite potency of cognition, and as this infinite potency, it has as its idea and as the ideal of negative philosophy an infinite potency of being. The negative philosophy cannot discover its ground, as it is grounded in actual being, and it hence poses a demand to discover this ground.⁵⁴⁰

The positive philosophy then, faced by the demands of the negative, posits the infinite potency of being as really existing, as an existing potency,⁵⁴¹ to the ground of determination from and against which things are determined – an unconditioned ground from which things are to be produced. Granted, we cannot think the positive face of the unconditioned. However, insofar as the negative unprethinkable and the existing, grounding unprethinkable being share a point where the negative ends and the positive begins, they are in a relationship of identity, and it is this identity that must be thought.⁵⁴²

III. Copula: the dynamics of identity

540 SW XIII, 165: “Solang die Vernunft sich selbst zum Objekt macht (und diese Richtung war ihr durch Kant gegeben und tief eingepägt), kann sie als ihren unmittelbaren Inhalt nur die unendliche Potenz des Seyns finden - dadurch sieht sie sich in die apriorische Stellung gegen alles Seyn, aber nur gegen das endliche gesetzt; sie kann aber selbst mit diesem nicht zu Stande kommen, es nicht – zum Abschluß bringen, ohne das Ueberseyende zu fordern, dieses aber hat ein ganz anderes Prius, nämlich nicht die Potenz, sondern das Seyn, und zwar das Seyn, dem kein Denken einen Grund oder Anfang finden kann. Wenn die Vernunft sich selbst Gegenstand ist, wenn das Denken sich auf den Inhalt der Vernunft richtet, wie in der negative Philosophie, so ist dieß etwas Zufälliges, die Vernunft ist dabei nicht in ihrer reinen Substantialität und Wesentlichkeit.” For English, see *GPP*, p. 205.

541 SW XIII, 155 (For English, see *GPP*, p. 198): “Das Letzte nun aber, was existiren kann, ist die Potenz, die nicht mehr Potenz, sondern, weil das Seyende selbst, reiner Actus ist; wir könnten sie darum die seyende Potenz nennen.“

542 Before we go on, however, it must be noted that in addition to the two Janus-faces of the unconditioned, there is a third face. If we are to keep with the Janus metaphor, it would be a face pointing upwards – or downwards. Following Schelling’s claim in the *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom* that that the ground of all things and all duality has to be an essence that we cannot but name *Ungrund* (“vor allem Grund und vor allem Existirenden, also überhaupt vor aller Dualität, ein Wesen seyn muss“ and that “wir es [nichts] anders nennen [können] als den Urgrund oder vielmehr Ungrund“ – SW VII, 406 and *PI*, p. 68), and following the reasoning that both material production and conceptual determination emerged from something other than them if they emerged at all and if there is a beginning at all, we are forced to postulate the existence of *Ungrund* – and stay silent in its face, insofar as it is not just non-conceptual, it also does not stand in any relationship to any concept. To use some foreshadowing, the unprethinkable and ground both contain the concept’s extainment, while the *Ungrund* does not. To try and define the unground by transforming it into a principle, as we did in Chapter I with the unprethinkable being: it is that principle by which everything, no matter how primordial, is a consequent and has an antecedent.

Identity, as Schelling points out pithily in the *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, is not sameness.⁵⁴³ Indeed, in his middle and late writings, Schelling coins a concept of identity which points to a generative form of identity.⁵⁴⁴ Hence, if we use this concept to think about identity, then the statement “unprethinkable being is the fact of unprethinkability of being” does not mean that unprethinkable being is the fact of unprethinkability in the exact same way in which it is the unprethinkable *being*, and neither does it mean that the unprethinkable being and the fact of unprethinkability correlate, as as they are not separated, as if lying on two parallel lines, to then be correlated. Rather, the statement should be read according to “[t]he ancients’ profoundly meaningful logic differentiat[ing] subject and predicate as what precedes and what follows (*antecedens et consequens*)”.⁵⁴⁵ According to this logic, there is a relationship of antecedent and consequent between the unprethinkable being and the fact of being’s unprethinkability, whereby the actual unprethinkable being is the real temporal antecedent of the fact of unprethinkability: the unprethinkable being has to exist out there, in order for anything – including the fact of unprethinkability as a transcendental condition – to be generated. The fact of being’s unprethinkability is, after all, only a local emergence,⁵⁴⁶ conditioned,⁵⁴⁷ there because-of-thought without ceasing to be the condition of thought. Moreover, the statement of identity between the unprethinkable being and the fact of unprethinkability can be meaningfully reversed, without it becoming just a play on words – in any relationship between antecedent

543 SW VII, 341: “Der Grund solcher Mißdeutungen, welche auch andere Systeme in reichem Maß erfahren haben, liegt in dem allgemeinen Mißverständniß des Gesetzes der Identität oder des Sinns der Copula im Urtheil. Ist es gleich einem Kinde begreiflich zu machen, daß in keinem möglichen Satz, der der angenommenen Erklärung zufolge die Identität des Subjekts mit dem Prädicat aussagt, eine Einerleiheit oder auch nur ein unvermittelter Zusammenhang dieser beiden ausgesagt werde - indem z. B. der Satz: dieser Körper ist blau, nicht den Sinn hat, der Körper sey in dem und durch das, worin und wodurch er Körper ist, auch blau, sondern nur den, dasselbe, was dieser Körper ist, sey, obgleich nicht in dem nämlichen Betracht, auch blau: so ist doch diese Voraussetzung, welche eine völlige Unwissenheit über das Wesen der Copula anzeigt, in Bezug auf die höhere Anwendung des Identitätsgesetzes zu unsrer Zeit beständig gemacht worden.“ For English, see: *PI*, 13.

544 For an interesting approach to identity, which considers the law of identity in Schelling as threefold: as absolute identity, as quantitative indifference (the point at which subject and predicate meet) and as the quantitative difference between subject and predicate, see Rie, S.: *Individualität und Selbstheit*. Paderborn: 2005, p. 72, [zit. *Individualität und Selbstheit*]. For perhaps the most important discussion of identity in the *Identitätsphilosophie*, in the literature, see *Das Unendliche Mangel*, p. 187ff.

545 *PI*, 14. For German, see: SW VII, 342: “Die alte tiefsinnige Logik unterschied Subjekt und Prädicat als vorangehendes und folgendes (*antecedens et consequens*), und drückte damit den reellen Sinn des Identitätsgesetzes aus. Selbst in dem tautologischen Satz, wenn er nicht etwa ganz sinnlos seyn soll, bleibt dieß Verhältniß. [...] Selbst in dem tautologischen Satz, wenn er nicht etwa ganz sinnlos seyn soll, bleibt dieß Verhältniß. Wer da sagt: der Körper ist Körper, denkt bei dem Subjekt des Satzes zuverlässig etwas anderes als bei dem Prädicat; bei jenem nämlich die Einheit, bei diesem die einzelnen im Begriff des Körpers enthaltenen Eigenschaften, die sich zu demselben wie *Antecedens* zum *Consequens* verhalten. Eben dieß ist der Sinn einer andern älteren Erklärung, nach welcher Subjekt und Prädicat als das Eingewickelte und Entfaltete (*implicitum et explicitum*) entgegengesetzt wurden.“

546 Because thought is a local emergence – it arises at some point in time and space.

547 A “conditioned unconditioned” sounds very odd – but only until we remember that relations are very important for Schelling: it is unconditioned for our reason, but conditioned insofar as it only arises in reason.

and consequent, the consequent retroactively determines the antecedent because the antecedent's being antecedent depends on the existence of a consequence which followed from that antecedent.⁵⁴⁸ Thus, if we invert the identity relationship between the unprethinkable being and the fact of being's unprethinkability, the fact of unprethinkability becomes the ideal ground of thinking the real ground; it would be the negative key to beginning the construction of a positive philosophy. These two directions of reading the same identity are, respectively, positive and negative.⁵⁴⁹ The first direction, in taking the unprethinkable being as antecedent, lays this ground as a starting-point for the emergence of everything, opening up to consequences for thought, among others, i.e., to the material production of everything, and to its conceptual determination. The second direction starts from the fact of being's unprethinkability, which is obviously not itself being, but its infinite potency – it is the essence of what being is, and it can only ground the “appearance” of actual unprethinkable *being*, strangely, but predictably, in thought, i.e. it is the mere thought of unprethinkable being. This thought, the unprethinkable being discovered as required ground for the operations of reason, is the demand requested by the negative philosophy in laying its foundations and is finally uncovered in the positive. To sum all this in two little formulae: the being of the unprethinkable being brings essence (the whatness of things) into existence, and a philosophy of essence paves way to a philosophy of existence.

The identity of the infinite potency of being (as content of the infinite potency of cognition) within the negative philosophy and the actual unprethinkable infinitely open being within the positive, as well as the identity between unprethinkable being and the principle of unprethinkability and the relation of these four terms towards each other as antecedent and consequent, invites the conclusion that positive and negative philosophy extain each other in the way which was already examined in chapter II: namely, in the process of mutual border-determination between two different things, which are dependent on each other through this border-determination despite their difference. If we map the relationship of extainment onto identity and onto the relation between antecedence and consequence, it becomes clear that grounds do not contain consequents but *extain* them, since grounds are only grounds when they produce something new, something not contained in them, something which defines them in turn, and so consequents are only consequent when they have a degree of independence from their ground. Because of this independence, consequents also extain grounds as their antecedents: they define grounds without being part of them. Grounds and consequents involve each other in the production of each other's boundaries. In this relationship of mutual

548 See *Nature Thought*, p.39.

549 Theunissen calls this “die Doppelbödigkeit des Anfangs der Sprache” – compare *Aufhebung des Idealismus*, p. 22.

extainment, extained things can contain extainments which extain them.⁵⁵⁰ The identity between the unprethinkable being and the fact of being's unprethinkability, between the series of positive philosophy and that of the negative is then an identity of mutual extainment and codeterminance. Instead of being a double series whose horns are parallel to one another, the positive and the negative are two parts of one line – or one curve, touching in identity at the starting point of the former and the endpoint of the latter.⁵⁵¹

IV. The reunification of philosophy

This chapter, up until now, has been tasked with setting up an inventory of tools one needs for the articulation of the relationship between the positive and negative philosophies (and not merely the starting point of the former and the endpoint of the latter). With these tools, the chapter has uncovered that the positive philosophy is not a mysticism, not a narrative and not a commonplace empiricism and that its unconditioned starting-point is the endpoint of the negative, albeit with a different face and approached from a different direction. It has also uncovered the relationship of antecedence and consequence manifest in the relationship between the two faces of the unconditioned, and the relationship of mutual extainment between the two series of positive and negative philosophy such that positive and negative philosophies do not run independently, but mutually determine each other. Any moment of practicing philosophy, indeed, any moment of thinking, then, can be represented on such a diagram:

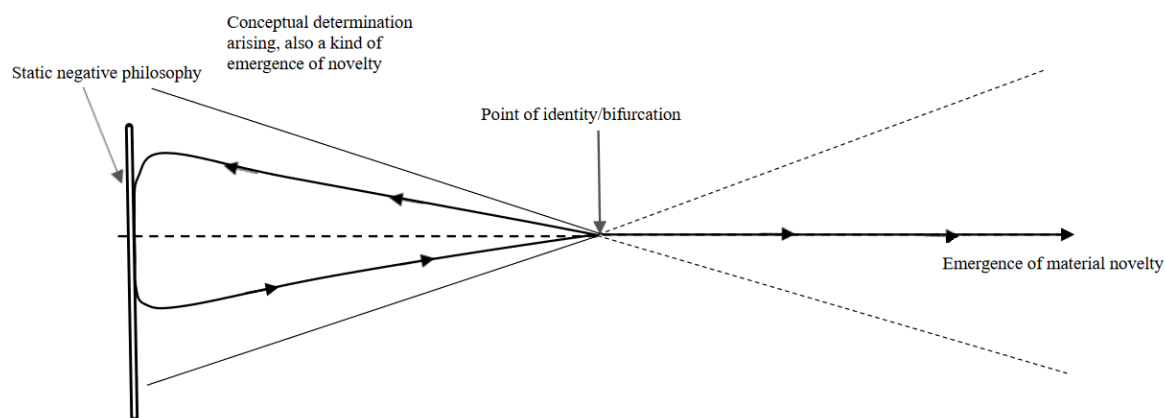


Fig.1 – Bifurcation resulting in two rows of generation: ideal and real⁵⁵²

550 *Nature Thought.*, p. 30.

551 See *Freiheit – Geschichte – Utopie*, p. 169f on the inverse relation between the positive philosophy and the negative.

552 For a further interesting graphic presentation of the *Potenzenlehre*, see Geijssen, J. A. L. J. J.: *Mitt-Wissenschaft. F. W. J. Schellings Philosophie der Freiheit und der Weltalter als Weisheitslehre*, München: 2009, e.g. on pages 199, 204 und 210.

Philosophy is an activity taking place in the middle of the production of antecedents and consequents. When we consider “real”⁵⁵³ generation of novelty (even the real generation of ideal novelty, i.e. concepts), in which philosophy proceeds as genuinely positive, philosophy follows the actual emergence and generation of objects, using the potency dialectic of determination as a tool to trace the interrelations of those objects and generative processes and establishes this generation further as it writes its history (which is nevertheless more than just history in the usual sense of the word, since it describes the principles of generation behind things. This kind of philosophy is speculative, but only in the sense that it investigates already existing entities as to their generation and effects, and not in the sense of Kantian speculative reason, which postulates the existence of things out of pure thought.⁵⁵⁴ This philosophy then follows the train of thought according to which more and more novel entities can emerge, grounded in actual being and its unprethinkable character. This “following” is oriented towards the future, i.e. towards the fact that there is, in the world thought by this philosophy, an eschatology – and a terminus, towards which this world becomes (something which Schelling in the *Begründung der Positiven Philosophie* calls the “fortgehender, immer wachsender, mit jedem Schritt sich verstärkender Erweis des wirklich existirenden Gottes”⁵⁵⁵ – the ongoing proof of the existence of God, which is never fully complete. The same project – but oriented towards conceptual completion appears to have been followed in the sadly and ironically incomplete *Weltalter*).

On the other side of identity, we have the Kantian schema of thoroughgoing determination: conceptual determination arises against the infinite potency of being or the transcendental ideal of reason, according to the Schellingian definition of a concept formulated in the world of Iain Hamilton Grant: “[A] concept is not a thing, an object, nor an abstract container, but a form of movement overcoming its beginning in pursuit of the history of which it is consequent.”⁵⁵⁶ Here is the predicative scheme subject/object/subject-object, presented by Schelling, among other things, through the potencies. The concept applied in determination is

553 “Real” is not the best word here – conceptual determination, even in negative philosophy, is a real activity, carried out by real subjects. I must however denote this row as something, and since Schelling in his early work (e.g. in the *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*) has used the distinction ideal – real in order to refer to the double series of philosophy, I have decided to borrow this terminology.

554 See what Kant means by “speculative reason” in the *CPR*: speculative reason is the pure reason in that situation, where it seeks to overstep its boundaries. Metaphysics, for Kant, is speculative in this “bad” sense (B xiv). See B xxi: “Now after speculative reason has been denied all advance in this field of the supersensible, what still remains for us is to try whether there are not data in reason's practical data for determining that transcendent rational concept of the unconditioned, in such a way as to reach beyond the boundaries of all possible experience, in accordance with the wishes of metaphysics, cognitions a priori that are possible, but only from a practical standpoint.” Also see generally the B-preface of the *CPR*.

555 SW XIII, 131, see *GPP*, p. 181: “the progressive, strengthening with every step, and continually growing proof of the actually existing God.”

556 Grant, I. H.: “The Universe in the Universe. German Idealism and the Natural History of Mind” in *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, 72 (2013), pp. 297-316, here pp. 315.

a motion, produced by reason, as it strives to encompass its own history of generation, i.e. reflects upon itself and tries to apply itself to its own beginning – applying itself however only to one or another conceptual determination. The system of knowledge may only cast its light forward,⁵⁵⁷ but the concepts used by this system are retroactive, since they are directed onto a certain definite point in the past of the concept in order to produce more and more detailed determinations and bring them back to the present case of thinking. The biggest difference between this “ideal” series and the “real” one is that the first one does not deal with real generation, but focuses on a static point it seeks to determine, without considering the generation of this point and its future possibilities. At most, the negative philosophy can limit these possibilities through reason and determine them as purely abstract. The important nuance lies in the fact *if* the ideal series is reflected upon as a process of generation, its activity is also in a certain sense positive: it cannot be opposed to the positive philosophy of the first side, because it is an activity of the ideal series, so to speak, tracing its own historical progression. This is different from a negative philosophy in the sense in which Schelling criticises negative philosophies in the *Begründung* – such a philosophy merely focuses on the point to be determined *as a point*, without taking it (or itself, for that matter) to be a spatiotemporal process with certain material conditions, and it is in this sense ahistorical.⁵⁵⁸

The above tools and the schema give us a view of positive and negative philosophy which is different from the typical understanding of them as a double series whose strands run fairly independently of one another with their subjects clearly delineated into essence and existence, such that the negative ends and then the positive begins simply carrying over the negative’s end point. Such a limited account of the connection between the two philosophies is, however, difficult to avoid due to the differences in subject and method of the two philosophies – although Schelling does attempt to guard against this on multiple occasions, for example:

Ich kehre auf die Meinung zurück, welche einige faßten, als sie aus der Ferne von positiver Philosophie hörten, daß sie nämlich ganz an die Stelle der negativen treten, diese also verdrängen und aufheben sollte. So war es nie gemeint, so leicht gibt sich auch eine Erfindung nicht auf, wie die jener Philosophie, die sich inzwischen für mich zur negativen bestimmt hatte.⁵⁵⁹

557 SW III, 357.

558 If it is to be noticed, that it is hard to distinguish the two philosophies at this point, then it must be remarked that their identity indeed lies here.

559 SW XIII, 89 – *GPP*, p. 151: “I return to the opinion that some have formed as they heard from afar of the positive philosophy, namely that it should take the place of the negative entirely, and should thereby supplant and nullify [aufheben] the latter. Thus was it never intended, and so easily will a creation like that of this philosophy never surrender, a philosophy that since then has determined itself for me as the negative.” See also SW XIII, 80 (*GPP*, p. 145): “Als zuerst durch meine öffentlichen Vorlesungen etwas von positiver Philosophie verlautete, fanden sich mehrere, die sich der negativen gegen mich annehmen zu müssen glaubten, meinend, diese solle ganz abolirt werden, weil ich allerdings von der Hegelschen in solchem Sinne sprach; dieß geschah aber nicht, weil ich die Hegelsche Philosophie für die negative hielt; diese Ehre kann ich ihr nicht anthun, ich kann ihr gar nicht zugeben, die negative zu seyn, ihr Grundfehler besteht vielmehr eben darin, daß sie positiv seyn will.”

The schema presented in this chapter is different – the negative and the positive are presented much closer to each other than expected, they mutually determine each other, such that essence and existence are parts of one chain of production, both flowing from one identity. In the schematic representation above, production and conceptual determination might still look like they belong to two different chains, but that is a restriction of the diagram: conceptual novelty is produced just like any other kind of novelty, and moreover, concepts, as existing things, are not devoid of causal power: they can and do define the process of material production (as, for instance, in scientific discovery) – the processes on the two sides of the diagram mutually explain each other.

Of negative as a “wasteland devoid of all being” spoken of above, then, it can be said that it is only the abstraction which unfolds when essence is separated from its operative ground that Schelling heaps scorn on. He is only vehemently against a negative philosophy conceived aside from any positivity and aside from its own dynamic ground, as the philosophy of mere essence, taken in its isolated existence before becoming the ground of anything. Its restrictiveness does not stem from it being the philosophy of the concept, but from it taking the concept away from the process of grounding.⁵⁶⁰ The bad, restricted negative is essence surgically extracted from the chain of its operations, which is hardly a legitimate move in the schema of anything but abstraction,⁵⁶¹ as essence in its full capacity cannot even be separated from the chain in which it operates, into which it bifurcates. It is always grounded in another, and a positive philosophy gives this grounding due. A positive philosophy gives the grounding of real objects in each other its due as well. It is not that which catatonically stares as things are created. It is not the philosophy which does not address the whatness of things, but that which does not address *merely* the whatness of things. It is one which deals with the whole schema, the whole interplay of existences produced by nature and determined by reason.

From the foregoing analysis we can also see in what way a well-construed negative philosophy, one that gives consideration to the existence and characteristics of the positive, is necessary for preparing the existence of a true positive philosophy. Schelling himself calls both philosophies necessary and claims that they depend on each other:

Erst die recht verstandene negative Philosophie führt die positive herbei, und umgekehrt die positive Philosophie ist erst gegen die recht verstandene negative

560 On the other hand, Schelling notes that “Das wahre Logische, das Logische im wirklichen Denken, hat in sich eine nothwendige Beziehung auf das Seyn, es wird zum Inhalt des Seyns und geht nothwendig ins Empirische über. Die negative Philosophie als apriorische ist daher nicht in dem Sinn bloß logische Philosophie, daß sie das Seyn ausschloße.” – SW XIII, 101-102 (*GPP*, p. 160) – the concept should not be unrelated to being, neither it this that which cannot be related to being.

561 On this point see Loos, S.: “Das Denken und sein Anderes. Reflexionen zum Verhältnis von Vernunft und Göttlichem in der Spätphilosophie Schellings.” In Denker, A. und Zabrowski, H.: *System – Freiheit – Geschichte*, Stuttgart/Bad Canstatt: 2004, pp. 79-98, here p. 86.

möglich. Diese wenn sie in ihre Schranken sich zurückzieht, macht jene erst erkennbar, und dann nicht bloß möglich, sondern nothwendig.⁵⁶²

He goes so far as to claim that positive philosophy could not emerge without developments in the negative: “die positive Philosophie nicht gefunden, nicht entwickelt werden [konnte] ohne entsprechende Fortschritte in der negative”,⁵⁶³ and yet he also writes that the positive philosophy could also have found its beginning (but perhaps not discover its full measure and scope) without the negative:

Aber, wird man sagen, so ist sie [die positive philosophie] ja doch durch die negative begründet, inwiefern sie von dieser die Aufgabe erhält. Ganz richtig, aber die Mittel der Aufgabe zu genügen muß die positive sich rein selbst verschaffen. Wenn die erste bis zur Forderung der andern fortgeht, geschieht dieß nur in ihrem eignen Interesse, damit sie sich abschließe, nicht aber darum, als ob die positive nöthig hätte die Aufgabe von ihr zu erhalten oder von ihr begründet zu werden; denn die positive kann rein für sich anfangen, auch etwa mit dem bloßen Ausspruche: Ich will das, was über dem Seyn ist, was nicht das bloße Seyende ist, sondern mehr als dieses, der Herr des Seyns.⁵⁶⁴

We could summarize these considerations as follows: positive philosophy could very well arise without the negative – although, as Marcela Garcia points out, it is puzzling as to how it would locate its starting point without the “pointers” of the negative⁵⁶⁵ – but it is only through the latter that the necessity of the former becomes clear: negative philosophy demands something, which it because of its own limitations could itself never reach. Thus, on the basis of this demand, a well-grounded positive philosophy arises. This is how it comes forth in the neatly abstract presentation of the two philosophies – in historical actuality, they have arisen together, and they can only continue developing together:

Nun sehen wir aber in der Natur, in der organischen z. B., daß irgend ein Vorausgehendes, sich zum Negativen oder sich als Negatives zu bekennen, erst in dem Augenblick sich entschließt, in welchem ihm das Positive außer ihm gegeben wird. Es war also unmöglich, daß jene Philosophie sich zu der reinen Negativität entschließen konnte, die an sie gefordert war, ehe die positive Philosophie gefunden und wirklich vorhanden war.⁵⁶⁶

562 SW XIII, 80. *GPP*, 145: “Only the correctly understood negative philosophy leads to the positive philosophy; conversely, the positive philosophy is first possible only in contrast to the correctly understood negative. Only the latter’s withdrawal back into its limits makes the former discernable and then, not only possible, but also necessary.”

563 SW XIII, 89-90. For English see *GPP*, p. 144-145.

564 SW XIII, 93. *GPP*, p. 202: “Yet, one will say, then it [positive philosophy] is nonetheless grounded by the negative to the extent it receives this demand from it. Quite right, but the positive philosophy must, entirely on its own, supply the means to satisfy this demand. If the negative arrives at the demand for the positive, this occurs only in its own interest that it completes itself—but not as if the positive had the need to receive this demand from it or to be grounded by it. For the positive can begin purely of itself with even the simple words: I want that which is above being [über dem Seyn], that which is not merely being [das bloße Seyende], but rather what is more than this, the Lord of Being [Herr des Seyns].”

565 See *Significance of Aristotle* pp. 354-355.

566 SW XIII 84-85. *GPP*, p. 148. “Now we see in organic nature, however, that an earlier organism decides to become negative, or to declare itself as negative, at precisely that moment in which the positive arises

So, in the *Begründung* we see discussions of pre-Kantian philosophers whose philosophies cannot really be neatly categorised as either positive and negative, because they contain elements of both philosophies.⁵⁶⁷

It turns out that the double series of philosophy is itself a kind of abstraction – perhaps a pedagogical move, used by Schelling in order to introduce both philosophical methods, both sides of the identity, before revealing their oneness.⁵⁶⁸ Both philosophies, the “first” (negative)

outside of it. It was thus impossible that that philosophy could resolve itself to the pure negativity demanded of it before the positive philosophy was discovered and actually present.”

567 Hence in the *Grounding* we encounter the claim that Plato and Aristotle have not developed negative philosophies, but also not developed positive philosophies. Their philosophies were simply philosophies – not more and not less. On Socrates and Plato, Schelling writes as follows: “Am meisten zeugt dafür, daß der geistvollste seiner [Sokrates’] Schüler, Platon, die ganze Reihe seiner übrigen Werke hindurch dialektisch ist, aber im Gipfel und Verklärungspunkt aller – dafür nimmt wenigstens Schleiermacher den Timäos – oder wäre derselbe vielleicht ein Werk, wozu jugendlicher Ungestüm den dichterischen Philosophen hingerissen? – wie dem sey, im Timäos wird Platon geschichtlich, und bricht, freilich nur gewaltsam, ins Positive durch, nämlich so, daß die Spur des wissenschaftlichen Uebergangs kaum oder schwer zu entdecken ist – es ist mehr ein Abbrechen vom Vorhergegangenen (nämlich dem Dialektischen) als ein Uebergehen zum Positiven. Sokrates und Platon, beide verhalten sich gegen dieses Positive als ein nur zukünftiges, sie verhalten sich zu ihm prophetisch.” – SW XIII, 100 and *GPP*, p. 159. On Aristotle he writes thus: “Aristoteles wendet sich vom Logischen ab, sofern es erklärend, also positiv seyn will” (ebd.), but specifies that he has a lot of negative elements in his philosophy: “Die Philosophie des Aristoteles ist logische Philosophie, aber die von dem vorausgesetzten Existirenden und insofern von der Erfahrung ausgeht. Ihr Anfang ist Erfahrung, ihr Ende das reine Denken, das Logische im höchsten Sinne des Worts, ihr Ganzes aber ein im Feuer der reinsten Analysis bereiteter, aus allen Elementen der Natur und des Menschengestes abgezogener Geist. [...] Aristoteles konnte eine positive Philosophie nicht zulassen, die bei Platon eine bloße Anticipation war, und zu der auch ihm der wissenschaftliche Uebergang nicht gefunden war.” – SW XIII, 107 and *GPP*, p. 164.

568 If the two philosophies are really unified for Schelling, the question poses itself: how could Schelling criticise Hegel and distance himself from the Hegelian philosophy so forcefully, and what is the difference between their respective philosophies? According to the reading I have developed here, the potencies are dialectical principles of positive philosophy – how does this square with Schelling’s rejection of Hegel (see for instance SW X, 153)? This is exactly the question posed by Axel Hutter, as he discusses the quasi-rationalistic interpretation of Schelling by Walter Schulz in his book *Geschichtliche Vernunft* (see. Hutter, A.: *Geschichtliche Vernunft. Die Weiterführung der Kantischen Vernunftkritik in der Spätphilosophie Schellings*, Frankfurt/Main: 1996, p. 28, [cited as *Geschichtliche Vernunft*]). The answer to this question is multifaceted and could by no means be uncovered fully here. Some pointers, however, suggests themselves straight away: first, since the potency placeholders could be filled by many objects, the structure of the Potenzenlehre is like an empty canvas, ready for analysing some phenomenon or other. Without accepting such an interpretation of Schelling, many commentators have stressed his ambition to write a speculative epos – one is reminded here of the “unfolding cosmic poem” Jason Wirth speaks of (Wirth, J.: *Schelling’s Practice of the Wild*. Albany: 2015, p. 113), Wolfram Högerebe’s study on the influence of Dante on Schelling (*P&G*, pp. 31-36), Lothar Knatz on what he calls “höhere Geschichte” (*Geschichte – Kunst – Mythos*, pp. 134-138) or the work of Peter Oesterreich on the epos of the *Weltalter* (Oesterreich, P. L.: “Die Freiheit, der Irrtum, der Tod und die Geisterwelt. Schellings anthropologischer Übergang in der Metaphysik”. In Jantzen, J. and Oesterreich, P.L. (Eds.) *Schellings Philosophische Anthropologie*. Stuttgart/Bad Canstatt: 2002). Schelling could attempt to construct such a speculative epos (as an epos and not just history) precisely because of the flexibility of the Potenzenlehre: it gives the philosopher a possibility to conceive the world on different levels as different configurations of the potencies. There is freedom in the application of the potencies as a philosophical instrument. Furthermore, there are essential differences between Schelling’s understanding of the dialectic and that of Hegel. Markus Gabriel discusses those differences in the third of his Aarhus lectures on Schelling, claiming that Schelling and Hegel disagree not just with respect to positive philosophy, but also “on the level of negative philosophy, that is, about some of the details in our account of the structure of pure thought and its relation to what there actually is. In this context, [Schelling] defends a position much closer to Kant in that he argues that being and thought are not necessarily coextensive (as Hegel wants to show with his *Science of Logic*), but that they rather contingently coincide.” (*Aarhus III* p.115). In the following lecture, Gabriel launches a Schellingian attack on

and the “highest” (positive) are united again the moment it is clearly seen what sort of distinction lies between them; this is clearest in full knowledge of their respective limitations:

Wenn Kant am Ende seiner Kritik alles Positive (Dogmatische) von der Vernunft abweist, geschieht ganz dasselbe von Seiten der richtig verstandenen negativen Philosophie; nur darin liegt ihr Unterschied von Kant, daß sie das Positive positiv ausschließt, d. h. zugleich es in einer andern Erkenntniß setzt, was Kant nicht gethan hat. Aber obgleich wir auf eine unzweifelhafte Weise einsehen, daß die Philosophie nur in zwei Wissenschaften sich vollendet, ist doch jetzt der Schein von zwei verschiedenen, nebeneinander bestehenden Philosophien, der allerdings ein Skandal der Philosophie zu nennen gewesen wäre, durch die letzte Erörterung verschwunden. Es hat sich gezeigt, daß die negative Philosophie die positive setzen muß, aber indem sie diese setzt, macht sie sich ja selbst nur zum Bewußtseyn derselben, und ist insofern nichts mehr außer dieser, sondern selbst zu dieser gehörig, also ist doch nur Eine Philosophie.⁵⁶⁹

The distinction between the two philosophies, the doubling of the series is only real as a doubling from the standpoint of a Kantian transcendental subject, firmly situated within the

Hegel: “Hegel assumes the actuality of a starting point on this side of pure thinking and only belatedly attempts to catch up with what is already there, that is pure thinking. Yet, how is it possible to move from the position of infinite or absolute knowing, that is, of alleged knowledge from a God’s eye point of view to an understanding of finitude without thereby illicitly transforming finitude into a mere disguise of the ‘truly infinite?’” Hegel misses the Schellingian insight: the standpoint of philosophically articulating anything about thought always relies on an abstraction from actuality instead of identifying being with pure thinking. (*Aarhus IV*, pp. 126-128). We can also find an analysis of those differences in Beach’s *Potencies of the God(s)*. The Hegelian dialectic is, according to this analysis a dialectic of sublation, and produces no new principles. The Schellingian dialectic is a dialectic of creation, and it produces something new with every iteration of the dialectic. Furthermore, since thought is a structuring of that which precedes thought, Schelling accepts the concept of “concrete universal”, culminating in the idea of a personal absolute – God. Existence cannot be reduced to the universal because of the unprethinkability of being (*Potencies of the God(s)*, p. 88; also see Ferrer, D.: “Schellings *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen* als Systementwurf“. In Hühn, L., Schwab, P. (Ed.): *System, Natur und Anthropologie. Zum 200. Jubiläum von Schellings Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*, München: 2014, pp. 103-120, here pp. 116-120). For Schelling, God is a person, while for Hegel, “absolute Geist aber [...] keine Person; er ist, wie der objektive Geist, eine Gebietsbezeichnung“ (Schulz, W.: “Macht und Ohnmacht der Vernunft“, in Hasler, L.: *Schelling. Seine Bedeutung für eine Philosophie der Natur und der Geschichte. Referate und Kolloquien der Internationalen Schelling-Tagung Zürich 1979*, Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt, pp. 21-34, here p. 23). Moreover, in the aforementioned Aarhus lectures, Markus Gabriel makes it clear that there is no room for contingency in Hegel’s philosophy except in the study of nature, while for Schelling, contingency is part and parcel of our very relation to the logical space. For this, see *Aarhus III*, p. 117. Finally, Hegel and Schelling’s respective conceptions of time are very different, since Hegel conceives of time as merely representation, while for Schelling, as we will see in Chapter VI, time is real (also see *Potencies of the Gods*, p. 90 and *Geschichtliche Vernunft*, pp. 88-90). It could nevertheless be the case that Schelling and Hegel are closer to each other than is normally acknowledged. See on this *Potencies of the Gods*, p. 88; *Geschichtliche Vernunft*, pp. 71-72 und Hermanni, F.: “Hegel als Episode? Die Bedeutung der Hegelschen Philosophie für die Entwicklung der Spätphilosophie Schellings.“ in Paetzold, H. und Schneider, H. (Ed.): *Schellings Denken der Freiheit. Festschrift Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik zum 70. Geburtstag*, Kassel: 2010, pp. 237-252, [zit. *Hegel als Episode*], for analyses of how Hegel has influenced the philosophy of late Schelling.

⁵⁶⁹ SW XIII, 152. *GPP*, p. 196: “If, at the end of his critique, Kant dismisses from reason everything that is positive (dogmatic), the very same thing occurs from the viewpoint of the correctly understood negative philosophy; it differs from Kant only in that it positively excludes what is positive, that is, it posits it in a different knowledge, which Kant had not done. But although we realize in an indubitable manner that philosophy only completes itself in two sciences, the semblance, nonetheless, of two different philosophies existing side by side, which certainly would have to be called a scandal of philosophy, now disappears through this last exposition. For it has become apparent that the negative philosophy must posit the positive, but by positing this it only makes itself into the consciousness of the positive, and is to this extent no longer outside the positive, but rather belongs to it itself, so that there is in fact but one philosophy.”

negative series and only able to represent the positive running outside and above it. Negative philosophy merely takes itself as actual, cuts itself off from the second series and treats itself as fully independent, although it actually is a lobotomised philosophy. When, however, the starting point of philosophy as a unified science is set at the identity of negative and positive philosophies, the distinction itself reveals is revealed as a distinction to be overcome. Since the negative and the positive philosophy are very closely tied to each other and since the negative delivers certain principles (namely the *Potenzenlehre*) to the positive, it is also important for us to note that the potencies can now definitely be regarded and used as positive.⁵⁷⁰

If we here remind ourselves of the three kinds of possibility in Thomas Buchheim's *Eins von Allem*, then we see that the potencies as logical possibilities are general principles of both philosophies; negative philosophy operates with the potencies as material possibilities and the potencies as real possibilities are the instruments of positive philosophy.⁵⁷¹ Hermann Schrödter shares this opinion, since he speaks of three perspectives onto the *Potenzenlehre*, which then gives philosophy two possible beginnings.⁵⁷²

Despite this rather reassuring conclusion – philosophy is unified again! – a rather difficult question raises itself, still revolving around the point of identity of the two philosophies, or rather, around unprethinkable being and its negative mirror image. Despite the potency schemas in chapter II, and despite the explorations of this chapter, we still do not know how the process of determination happens exactly. How are things determined – both the objects of our conceptual determination, as those that emerge completely independently from us? We have seen that something is defined by means of a potency (+A) and against a certain horizon either conceptually or ontologically. We, however, have not yet seen, how this process proceeds – we have not yet gotten, as Schelling puts it, to the bottom of things. It seems that in order to determine things – all things – these must be part of a whole. What does this mean for an ungroundedly open philosophy without a particular telos, as it was presented in chapter III? How can we attempt to think unprethinkable being at this stage? When we furthermore accept that human spirit and nature both operate in the same world (and we do indeed accept this, as

570 Compare this to the idea of the dialectical sublation of potencies as abstract principles in Müller-Bergien, *Schellings Potenzenlehre* 2006, p. 285.

571 I quote Thomas Buchheim once again: "Damit ist angedeutet, daß der große Umschwung zwischen negativer und positive Philosophie zusammengeht mit jener unabweislichen Verschiedenheit zweier Formen der Möglichkeitsrede". – *EvA*, p. 40. English: "It is indicated thus that the great reversal between negative and positive philosophy is accompanied by this irrefutable difference between two forms of speaking about possibility."

572 Compare. *Grundlagen der Lehre Schellings*, p. 577. This is a position more and more accepted in the more recent literature – so, Malte Krüger also takes the *Potenzenlehre* to be at the heart of the principles for both philosophies, taking the difference between them to be relationship between the absolute and those principles (see *Göttliche Freiheit*, pp. 142, 144-145) and so does Daniel Sollberger (see *Metaphysik und Invention*, pp. 229-231).

we should), then the determinant of both philosophy series should be one and the same – we have so far indeed presented the infinite potency of cognition and infinite potency of being (or the existence of unprethinkable being and the fact of being’s unprethinkability) as identical, but have not yet demonstrated that they function identically. This apparent need to investigate the source of all determination, now within the framework of positive philosophy, which is concerned with the progressive growing proof of the existence of God, leads to further questions: what role does God play at the crossroads of the positive and negative philosophies, as well as in the *Potenzenlehre*? Schelling emphasizes time and again that positive philosophy does not start out from being received in experience just as it does not start out from being as merely thought – “so wenig, als sie von dem bloß im Denken Seyenden ausgeht (denn da würde sie in die negative zurückfallen), von irgend einem in der Erfahrung vorkommenden Seyn aus[geht]”,⁵⁷³ and yet that it starts out from being: so, not from empirical being but from the entirety of experience. Positive philosophy should begin with the absolute outside thought – “von dem absolut außer dem Denken befindlichen Seyn ausgehen”⁵⁷⁴ and orient itself towards an infinite, eternally progressing proof for the existence of God. This orientation of the potencies with its two termini – absolute outside thought and God – has to be investigated, and in investigating it, we have to keep in mind that Schelling, in all his attempts to formulate a post-Kantian philosophy, accepts that pre-Kantian metaphysics is not possible and that all thinking, positive philosophy included, unfolds in a world conditioned by thought itself. Finally, Schelling writes, in *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* first, and then in the *Philosophie der Offenbarung* later, that the positive philosophy wants that which is above being. Above being, for Schelling, is person,⁵⁷⁵ and we will see in the following chapter how the positive tracing of all emergence is indeed a philosophy which seeks the *person* – since all emergence is the becoming of God and brings us closer to the divine person.

573 SW XIII, 126.

574 SW XIII, 127.

575 On God as person, see MiM, 333.

Presentation of God

The question of determination in the *Potenzenlehre* has until now only been examined with respect to individual things. A thing is, because of its particular material properties, negatively determined on one hand, and yet is positively determined in light of the determining activity of other processes or functions, as outlined in chapter II. But the entire potency chain, considered as a whole, has, according to Schelling, a definite direction – this is how Schelling introduces God into his philosophy, and this is the Schellingian eschatology.⁵⁷⁶ Since this work has so far discussed the *Potenzenlehre* as a Schellingian machinery of determination, and since, in Schelling's late philosophy, God does play a very prominent role, it is now imperative to examine what role God plays in this machinery, lest God remain a proverbial elephant in the conceptual room of this work. We see the tendency in Schelling's work to treat God as a direction-giver, at least since the *Freiheitsschrift*, where nature – that which in God is not he himself (“was in Gott selbst nicht Er Selbst ist”)⁵⁷⁷ – strives towards God and longs to become identical with him. Schelling assesses the possibility of reaching this endpoint differently in different texts – in the *Freiheitsschrift* it is as if nature will actually reach divine life;⁵⁷⁸ in the later writings on the *Potenzenlehre* Schelling does not discuss the attaining of the endpoint anymore, but only the process of striving.⁵⁷⁹ However this may be, it is important for the purposes of our *Potenzenlehre* investigation that we address the role of God, as well as the direction of the potency chain and its sources of determination.

How might we begin to answer this question preliminarily? I suggest that we first attempt to apply the *Potenzenlehre*, it being a system of placeholders, usable to analyse anything, to the world. If it is this case that something can be taken as one potency, i.e. as one level of the potency progression – and this I have argued in chapter III – we could in principle take “the

576 See Horn, F.: “Schellings Lehre von den Letzten Dingen”, in *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 6/3 (1954), pp. 248-265, here p. 250 and 261-263, as well as Brito, E.: “Création et eschatologie chez Schelling” in *Laval théologique et philosophique* 42/2, (1986), pp. 247-267, hier pp. 258-261 [zit. *Création et Eschatologie*] and Zoller, G.: “Church and state: Schelling's political philosophy of religion” in Ostaric, L. (Ed.): *Interpreting Schelling: Critical Essays*, Cambridge: 2014, pp. 200-215, p. 213, and also Heinrich, W.: *Schellings Lehre von den letzten Dingen*. Salzburg: 1955, pp. 13-17. An interesting reading of Schelling's eschatology in light of current social dynamics and current consumerism can be found in McGrath, S. J.: “The Late Schelling and the End of Christianity”. In *Schelling-Studien* Bd. 2 (2014), pp. 63-77, especially pp. 64-65 and McGrath, S. J.: “The Tyranny of Consumer-Capitalism and the Third Age of Revelation”. In *Analecta Hermeneutica* 5 (2013), pp. 1-11.

577 SW VII, 359 or, for English, *PI*, p. 29.

578 See e. g. SW VII, 408-409 or, for English, *PI*, p. 69-70.

579 It might be telling that the positive philosophy provides an “*Erweis*” for the existence of God, and not a “*Beweis*” - i.e., it provides a proof which cannot be completed. See Buchheim on this: Buchheim, T.: “Zur Unterscheidung von negativer und positiver Philosophie beim späten Schelling”. In Hahn, E. (Ed.): *Berliner Schelling-Studien* 2, Berlin: 2001, pp. 125-145, here pp. 139-140.

world” to be one potency, one element. Since Schelling constructs an open system, it is however clear that “the world” cannot be an entity or a thing. The world itself is the open-ended, eternally active potency chain. It would seem that we can only treat the sum of all potencies and their chains *actualised up until now* as an element of an even longer chain; this would be a more measured and more theoretically justified step. The already existing world (let us say at time = t) could be taken to be the third potency ($\pm A$), and then it would very clearly also be taken as the result of some process of determination and becoming at time = t-1. The world at point t-1 could then be taken to be the first potency (-A), in order to view this chain of becoming from another direction. In this case we have the world, taken as a stage of potency progression, serving as matter for a further potency stage in time, but what is it that determines the world? What – or perhaps should we say who – steers the potency progression as a whole?

If we are to pose these questions, we find ourselves immediately landed in a dilemma – if we look at Schelling’s *Potenzenlehre* texts, we see that the chain of operations of the potencies in some sense runs both cyclically and linearly. Its cyclicity was already examined in chapters II and III, where I have demonstrated that the last member of a potency triad becomes the first member in the next potency triad, and that the potencies form a kind of spiral. The linearity of the *Potenzenlehre* logically rests on the sheer fact that the chain has somewhere had its beginning, and that it should be directed somewhere, even if such a direction does not have a fixed teleology and if the potency progression does not have a determinate end (a fact quite important in light of Schelling’s focus on freedom and the openness of his system). This “dilemma” can seem trivial: is it not clear that the potencies form a spiral and not a circle, and is the potency progression therefore not obviously composed of circles which nevertheless form a line? This can indeed be accepted, but the question of the starting point of the *Potenzenlehre*, as well as its direction-giver (if not the endpoint) still raise themselves. Schelling goes on to give a possible answer to those questions, as well as to the problematic of linearity and cyclicity, and he does it in two different ways. In the later texts, e.g. the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*, or the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie*, Schelling is mostly concerned with the individual cycle of the potencies (i.e. with ontology); however, before he developed the latest full-fledged version of the *Potenzenlehre*, he had already written about very the emergence of the individual cycle in the *Freiheitschrift* and the *Weltalter*. These two ways of looking at the problem relate to one another like the science of dynamics relates to cosmology – they look at the process of becoming from different levels. In this chapter, I will concern myself with both these levels, mostly focusing on the first, since this work is primarily concerned with the texts investigating this first level, but also discussing the second, since it can provide us the key to the role of God in the *Potenzenlehre*. This

chapter, therefore, will primarily deal with two “images” of God – that of the *Weltalter* on one hand and that of the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* and the *Andere Deduktion der Prinzipien der Positiven Philosophie* on the other. The *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* and the *Andere Deduktion* are directly relevant to the investigation, both being texts from the latest “period” of Schelling’s oeuvre, while the *Weltalter* will be discussed in order to provide contrast to this latest Schelling conception of God. With the help of those two images, I will examine the function of God as a direction-giver and asymptotic limit of potency development. In the face of these considerations and the definitions of positive and negative philosophies presented in the previous chapter, I will then formulate a hypothesis concerning the role of God in Schelling’s *Potenzenlehre*.

I Circle and line

Since God appears as a direction-giver in the *Freiheitsschrift*, it is with the *Freiheitsschrift* that I begin. There Schelling poses, for the first time, a certain dynamic of grounding which he then later incorporates into the *Potenzenlehre*. He begins with pantheism, claiming it is, in a certain sense, inescapable: “wenn Pantheismus weiter nichts als die Lehre von der Immanenz der Dinge in Gott bezeichnete, jede Vernunftansicht in irgend einem Sinn zu dieser Lehre hingezogen werden muß.”⁵⁸⁰ This means the following: if a philosophy sets out to speak about God at all, then this God has to be a pantheistic God. The significance of God for Schelling’s *Potenzenlehre*, however, will be looked at in the second part of this chapter.⁵⁸¹ First, we should accept the hypothesis of pantheism’s unavoidability and see how Schelling treats this pantheism. Schelling writes that the problem with specifically Spinozistic pantheism lies in the fact that, for Spinoza, things in God are at all *things* – that is, static, fixed entities. Against this problem, Schelling writes that things are to be conceived as becoming: “Wir erkennen vielmehr, daß der Begriff des Werdens der einzige der Natur der Dinge angemessene ist.”⁵⁸² The becoming of things takes place in and out of a ground, which is also the ground of God, that is “was in Gott selbst nicht *Er Selbst* ist”.⁵⁸³ This ground is nature. Furthermore, in the *Freiheitsschrift*, Schelling introduces the bifurcation at the heart of essence [Wesen]: “doch dieß [ist] nicht zu vergessen: daß das Eine Wesen in seinen zwei Wirkungsweisen sich wirklich in zwei Wesen scheidet, daß es in dem einen bloß Grund zur Existenz, in dem andern

580 SW VII, 339 or, for English, *PI*, p. 11.

581 We will also see in what sense things are immanent in God, and in what sense they are not – this is a matter subject to questioning, since Schelling writes, on one page of the *Freiheitsschrift*, that pantheism – defined as the immanence of things in God – is unavoidable, while on another pages oft he exact same text he writes that the concept of immanence should be avoided: “der Begriff der Immanenz völlig zu beseitigen [ist], inwiefern etwa dadurch ein todttes Begriffenseyn der Dinge in Gott ausgedrückt werden soll.” – SW VII, 358 or *PI*, p. 28.

582 SW VII, 358-359 or *PI*, p. 28.

583 SW VII, 359 or *PI*, p. 28.

bloß Wesen (und darum nur ideal ist) [...]”.⁵⁸⁴ Essence splits into two, one of which is merely ground for existence, and the other *merely* essence. It is clear then, that essence for Schelling is operative essence: it does something, namely bifurcates into two modes: the ground of existence and mere essence. In this bifurcation, “mere” essence is essence as merely existent, before it becomes the ground of something other, before a consequent flows from it, and so merely ideal. Essence operating as ground of existence, on the other hand, is essence insofar as it is active and brings novelty into being.

Due to this bifurcation into ground and existence within God (which is identical, in fact, to the bifurcation at the heart of each entity and process, which is simultaneously existence and ground for the existence of something), God strives towards Himself, towards the reunification of the dark principle of ground with the light of divine understanding. Nature (ground of God) should become God, and it strives towards this. This striving is the attraction and the willing of divine love, the love which exerts its pull onto the ground. At the end of all becoming, nature (which, being that in God which is not God himself, including human beings) will become identical⁵⁸⁵ with God, since the divine love is the bond of powers in God.⁵⁸⁶ This becoming of things in God takes place in stages: out of the initial cision of chaotic powers of the ground, something springs to the light. The two powers, having undergone cision, form the body of the creation, and its soul arises in between.⁵⁸⁷ The dark

584 SW VII, 409 or *PI*, p. 71. It should be remarked that in this passage Schelling uses the word “Wesen”, but it is rendered “being” in the popular Love and Schmitt translation. Instead of talking about being, Schelling tells us of one essence which bifurcates into two sorts of essence.

585 Full-blown identity is consequently only attainable at the eschatological end of becoming; it is not static, but a goal, as well as a striving and a process. It is also important to remark, that Schelling wrote already in the *System des Transzendentalen Idealismus* that history is a continuous revelation of God, which will come to its completion only in the last period of history (SW III, 603-604): “Der Mensch führt durch seine Geschichte einen fortgehenden Beweis von dem Daseyn Gottes, einen Beweis, der aber nur durch die ganze Geschichte vollendet seyn kann. Es kommt alles darauf an, daß man jene Alternative einsehe. Ist Gott, d. h. ist die objektive Welt eine vollkommene Darstellung Gottes, oder was dasselbe ist, des vollständigen Zusammentreffens des Freien mit dem Bewußtlosen, so kann nichts anders seyn, als es ist. [...] Die dritte Periode der Geschichte wird die seyn, wo das, was in den früheren als Schicksal und als Natur erschien, sich als Vorsehung entwickeln und offenbar werden wird, daß selbst das, was bloßes Werk des Schicksals oder der Natur zu seyn schien, schon der Anfang einer auf unvollkommene Weise sich offenbarenden Vorsehung war. Wann diese Periode beginnen werde, wissen wir nicht zu sagen. Aber wenn diese Periode seyn wird, dann wird auch Gott seyn.” For English, see Schelling, F.W.J. *System of Transcendental Idealism*. Tr. Peter Heath. Charlottesville: 1978, p. 211 [cited henceforth as *System of Transcendental Idealism*].

586 SW VII, 390.

587 SW VII, 361-362: “Weil nämlich dieses Wesen (der anfänglichen Natur) nichts anderes ist als der ewige Grund zur Existenz Gottes, so muß es in sich selbst, obwohl verschlossen, das Wesen Gottes gleichsam als einen im Dunkel der Tiefe leuchtenden Lebensblick enthalten. Die Sehnsucht aber, vom Verstande erregt, strebt nunmehr, den in sich ergriffenen Lebensblick zu erhalten, und sich in sich selbst zu verschließen, damit immer ein Grund bleibe. Indem also der Verstand, oder das in die anfängliche Natur gesetzte Licht, die in sich selbst zurückstrebende Sehnsucht zur Scheidung der Kräfte (zum Aufgeben der Dunkelheit) erregt, eben in dieser Scheidung aber die im Geschiedenen verschlossene Einheit, den verborgenen Lichtblick, hervorhebt, so entsteht auf diese Art zuerst etwas Begreifliches und Einzelnes, und zwar nicht durch äußere Vorstellung, sondern durch wahre Ein-Bildung, indem das Entstehende in die Natur hineingebildet wird, oder richtiger noch, durch Erweckung, indem der Verstand die in dem geschiedenen Grund verborgene Einheit oder Idea hervorhebt. Die in dieser Scheidung getrennten (aber nicht völlig auseinandergetretenen) Kräfte sind der Stoff, woraus nachher

ground marks itself as that which Schelling calls the “indivisible remainder” –“nie aufgehender Rest”⁵⁸⁸ and what then in his later writings will undergo various transformations and be called the “unprethinkable”. This remainder looms at the background of becoming, and manifests itself as the pervasive realization, happening at a multitude of levels, that the world once was a blind dark raw chaos, that it has only contingently come to define and organize itself and that ultimately, it could all be otherwise – including a re-descending into the blind dark raw chaos.⁵⁸⁹ Despite that, nature moves forward:

[...D]as allerinnerste Band der Kräfte [löst sich] nur in einer stufenweise geschehenden Entfaltung, und bei jedem Grade der Scheidung der Kräfte [entsteht] ein neues Wesen aus der Natur, dessen Seele um so vollkommener seyn muß, je mehr es das, was in den andern noch ungeschieden ist, geschieden enthält.⁵⁹⁰

This line of thinking is further developed in the *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*, which already identifies this ground of God, the first potency, with matter,⁵⁹¹ and in the *Weltalter* – and here, for brevity’s sake, I will focus on the third draft of it, with some excursions into the two earlier versions. The *Weltalter* describes the first potency as the substratum of nature and adds an extra element to the picture, calling this substratum the “eternal past”.⁵⁹² We thus have, in the *Weltalter*, yet another instance of Schelling postulating an eternal beginning for the potency progression:

[Gott] hat nur insofern keinen Anfang, als er keinen Anfang seines Anfangs hat. Der Anfang in ihm ist ewiger Anfang, d. h. ein solcher, der von aller Ewigkeit her Anfang war, und noch immer ist, und auch nie aufhört Anfang zu seyn.⁵⁹³

However, this beginning, Schelling says, needs an end:

der Leib configurirt wird; das aber in der Scheidung, also aus der Tiefe des natürlichen Grundes, als Mittelpunkt der Kräfte entstehende lebendige Band ist die Seele.” For English, see *PI*, pp. 30-31. Also compare SW XIII, 130-131.

588 SW VII, 360.

589 Markus Gabriel reads this as a constant danger of skepticism, lying at the limits of our cognition, since the conceptually determined world arises out of a complete lack of concepts, and we never have the guarantee that things are not *other*. See *Transcendental Ontology*, p. 34.

590 SW VII, 362 or, for English, *PI*, p. 31: “[T]he innermost bond of forces loosens itself only in a gradually occurring unfolding; and at each point of division of forces a new being emerges from nature whose soul must be that much more complete the more it contains divided what is not divided in other things.”

591 SW VII, 435.

592 SW VIII, 254 (for English, see *Ages of the World*, p. 39): “Wollten wir den reinen Weg der geschichtlichen, d. i. wissenschaftlichen, Darstellung wandeln, so müßten wir das, was Gott als seine ewige Vergangenheit in sich hat, auch als das Erste, als das wirklich Vorausgehende von Gott behandeln; die Betrachtung, daß es seine ewige Vergangenheit ist, durfte uns nicht daran hindern; Gott selbst erkennt jenes Leben als das durch ihn und also auch in Bezug auf ihn Vergangene; daß es ein ewig Vergangenes ist, ist nur die letzte Bestimmung, die wir zu dem ganzen großen Begriff hinzufügen, dessen Erkenntniß der Gewinn der ganzen bisherigen Untersuchung ist.”

593 SW VIII, 225 or, for English, *Ages of the World*, p. 17: “Therefore, this God has no beginning only insofar as it has no beginning of its beginning. The beginning in it is an eternal beginning, that is, a beginning that was, as such, from all eternity and still always is and one that never ceases to be a beginning.”

Denn überhaupt nur in der Verneinung liegt der Anfang. Aller Anfang ist seiner Natur nach nur ein Begehren des Endes oder dessen, was zum Ende führt, und verneint sich also als das Ende. Es ist nur erste Spannung des Bogens, nicht sowohl selbst seyend als der Grund, daß etwas sey.⁵⁹⁴

We should remark here that Schelling expresses himself cryptically at this point, speaking about a “Begehren des Endes oder dessen, was zum Ende führt” – a desire for the end or that which leads to an end – it seems like there is an uncertainty as to what the desire is for. For now, this uncertainty should be kept in mind as we discuss the potency doctrine developed in this work as applied to God. The desire harboured by God’s ground is what Schelling calls in the *Freiheitsschrift* “die Sehnsucht des Einen, sich selbst zu gebären”⁵⁹⁵ – desire of the One to give birth to oneself. The ‘One’ here is God taken as unity, with its ground, its essence – all of it. God, beginning from his ground, unfolds, striving towards actualising His essence and turning Himself towards and into the One, with ground finally equal to essence. The essence towards which God tends here is that which in God is freedom – the second potency. Just like in later *Potenzenlehre* texts, it is maximal actuality, except this time in God. This is God’s quest towards his own divinity; He is to resect Himself from His ground, while staying in identity with that very ground. The ground and its tendency are furthermore that which in God is necessary⁵⁹⁶ – recall, in this respect Schelling calls this very ground the nature of God (also “Keim Gottes”⁵⁹⁷ in the first draft of the *Weltalter*). This nature however requires *another*, furthermore, an other that is freedom.⁵⁹⁸ In the *Weltalter* this is that essence towards which God strives. It is His freedom and the second potency. Just like in the other texts on the *Potenzenlehre*, this essence is that which in God is His maximal actuality. It is also – as we have seen with second potency all throughout this work – already much more difficult to think about – this is how Schelling describes it in the *Weltalter*:

Ja wohl ist es ein Nichts, aber wie die lautere Freiheit ein Nichts ist, wie der Wille, der nichts will, der keine Sache begehrt, dem alle Dinge gleich sind, und der darum von keinem bewegt wird. Ein solcher Wille ist nichts und alles. Er ist nichts, inwiefern er weder selbst wirkend zu werden begehrt, noch nach irgend

594 SW VIII, 224 or, for English, *Ages of the World*, p. 16: “For the beginning really only lies in the negation. All beginning is, in accord with its nature, only a desire for the end or for what leads to the end and hence, negates itself as the end. It is only the tension of the bow—it is not so much that which itself has being as it is the ground that something is.”

595 SW VII, 395.

596 SW VIII, 209-210 (for English, see *Ages of the World* p. 4-5): “Es ist in Gott Nothwendigkeit und Freiheit. Jene wird schon dadurch, daß ihm ein nothwendiges Daseyn zugeschrieben wird, anerkannt. Die Nothwendigkeit ist insofern, natürlich zu reden, in Gott vor der Freiheit, weil ein Wesen erst daseyn muß, damit es frei wirken könne. Die Nothwendigkeit liegt der Freiheit zu Grunde und ist in Gott selbst das Erste und Aelteste, soweit eine solche Unterscheidung in Gott stattfinden kann, was erst durch weitere Betrachtung sich aufklären muß. Ob nun gleich der Gott, welcher der nothwendige, derselbe ist, welcher der freie ist, so sind beide doch nicht einerlei. [...] Das Nothwendige von Gott nennen wir die Natur Gottes. [...] Aber auch diese Natur Gottes ist lebendig, ja die höchste Lebendigkeit und nicht so geradezu auszusprechen.”

597 WA I, 78. English: “the seed of God”.

598 SW VIII, 233-234 (for English, see *Ages of the World*, p. 22-23).

einer Wirklichkeit verlangt. Er ist alles, weil doch von ihm als der ewigen Freiheit allein alle Kraft kommt, weil er alle Dinge unter sich hat, alles beherrscht und von keinem beherrscht wird.⁵⁹⁹

This is really not much to go on, but important to us here is the second potency's status in relation to the first potency. Schelling remarks that the first potency – the beginning – is that which does not have being and should not be. As we have seen above, this first potency (beginning) is only a yearning towards something:

Einleuchtend ist nun, daß das, was zum Anfang gesetzt wird, eben dasselbe ist, das in der Folge untergeordnet wird. Der Anfang ist nur Anfang, inwiefern er nicht das ist, das eigentlich seyn soll, das wahrhaft und an sich Seyende. Wenn also Entscheidung ist, so kann nur das zum Anfang gesetzt werden, das durch seine besondere Art sich am meisten zur Natur des nicht Seyenden neigt.⁶⁰⁰

The end towards which the first potency aims is none other than the second potency – in the *Weltalter* it is called the prototype of nature, from which and all things of the external world are constructed: “alle Dinge dieser äußeren Welt Abbildungen von ihr sind”.⁶⁰¹ God – taken as a living whole – unfolds, overcoming its ground and striving towards the actualization of its freedom. This is its terminus; the actualisation of divine freedom is the endpoint of the aforementioned striving. Since Schelling describes the pure divine freedom as nothing, as the will which wills nothing – “der Wille, der nichts will”,⁶⁰² this divine endpoint is, at least in the *Weltalter*, an eternal and terrible stillness, terrifying because completely opposed to being:

Also ist jenes Naturlose, dessen die ewige Natur begehrt, kein Wesen, kein Seyendes, obwohl auch nicht das Gegentheil, sondern die ewige Freiheit, der lautere Wille, aber nicht der Wille zu etwas, z. B. Wille sich zu offenbaren, sondern der reine, sucht- und begierdelose Wille, der Wille sofern er nicht wirklich will. [...] Sie ist höchste Einfalt, und nicht sowohl Gott, als was in Gott selbst die Gottheit, also über Gott ist, wie auch schon einige Aeltere von einer Uebergottheit geredet. Sie ist nicht die göttliche Natur oder Substanz, sondern die verzehrende Schärfe der Reinheit, welcher der Mensch nur mit gleicher Lauterkeit sich zu nähern vermag. Denn da in ihr alles Seyn wie in einem Feuer aufgeht, so ist sie nothwendig jedem unnahbar, der noch im Seyn befangen ist.⁶⁰³

599 SW VIII, 235 or for English, see *Ages of the World*, p. 24: “It certainly is nothing, but in the way that pure freedom is nothing. It is like the will that wills nothing, that desires no object, for which all things are equal and is therefore moved by none of them. Such a will is nothing and everything. It is nothing insofar as it neither desires to become actual itself nor wants any kind of actuality. It is everything because only from it as eternal freedom comes all force and because it has all things under it, rules everything, and is ruled by nothing.”

600 SW VIII, 220-221 or for English, see *Ages of the World*, p. 13: “It is now clear that what is posited at the beginning is precisely that which is subordinated in the successor. The beginning is only the beginning insofar as it is not that which should actually be, that which truthfully and in itself has being. If there is therefore a decision, then that which can only be posited at the beginning inclines, for the most part and in its particular way, to the nature of that which does not have being.”

601 SW VIII, 288 or for English, see *Ages of the World*, p. 65.

602 SW VIII, 235 or for English, see *Ages of the World*, p. 24.

603 SW VIII, 236 or for English, see *Ages of the World*, p. 25: “Hence, that which is without nature, which the eternal nature desires, is not a being and does not have being, although it is also not the opposite. Rather it is eternal freedom, the pure will, but not the will to something, such as the will to reveal itself, but rather the pure will without obsession and craving, the will insofar as it actually does not will. [...] It is the highest

Divine freedom is pure, complete freedom, and it is also simultaneously the state in which there is nothing more to happen, i.e. maximum determination. The nature of this connection between freedom and determination is not to be examined in this dissertation, but we can remark that Schelling's God is not a mere entity and is also not a process. We can venture forth the hypothesis that God is the entire structure of the All, from the beginning (i.e. from the necessity, which is also nature) to the end (i.e. the divine freedom), including the striving and hovering in between.⁶⁰⁴ In agreement with this hypothesis, Schelling writes that God is simultaneously the affirming and the negating force, i.e. He is their unity: both forces are active in Him (or to be more precise: He acts through both forces).⁶⁰⁵ The activity of the first potency⁶⁰⁶ of God, His nature, is the "restriction" [Verschließung] of His essence,⁶⁰⁷ the limiting eternal No. It is the inertia of nature, of God's ground, resisting the striving to freedom. The second potency stands in opposition for the first – for the Yes and for this striving itself.⁶⁰⁸

Now, since we have examined the second potency as extensively as possible as far as it has served our purpose, we can proceed to the third potency. The third potency is constructed out of the activity of the first two potencies, which in the *Weltalter* are nature and spirit. Nature and spirit differ as to how they are determined – nature is what is subject to negative, external

simplicity, not so much God itself, but the Godhead, which is hence, above God, in the way that some of the ancients already spoke of a Super-Godhead [Übergottheit]. 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."

604 Schelling writes, for instance in draft fragments for *Weltalter* (WA III, 4): "Inwiefern nun jeder [der Momente der Fortschreitstufen – DK] zu der untheilbaren unzertrennlichen Bewegung gehört, insofern ist Gott Alles u. Jedes in jener Fortschreitung u. ist doch auch nichts davon, nämlich nichts einzeln, stillstehend, insbesondere sondern nur in der unaufhaltsamen Bewegung (*in actu purissimo*)."

605 SW VIII, 215 or for English, see *Ages of the World*, p. 9.

606 I must remark here, that even the various drafts of the *Weltalter* develop different versions of potency structures, where multiple versions could even be extracted from the same draft. For instance in the third draft, in addition to the potencies of nature and freedom (and the potency in between them, which we will still examine), there are potencies signified by α , β and γ . If we acknowledge that potencies are, as I have already argued, functions, then the different, apparently incompatible accounts of the *Potenzenlehre* in the same text are different attempts to present the complex interplay of powers in God – a complexity which can be described differently, depending on one's focus. Here I will simply focus on nature, freedom, and that which stands in between, namely the world.

607 SW VIII, 223 or for English, see *Ages of the World*, p. 15.

608 See SW VIII, 218 or SW VIII, 299-300 (so, for English, *Ages of the World*, p. 11 or pp. 73-74): "In diesem Ja und jenem Nein liegt jene Abstoßung und Anziehung, die wir früher als zum Bewußtseyn nothwendig gefordert. Als Nein ist die Gottheit ein an- und in sich ziehendes Feuer; als das Ja aber ist sie Ursache jenes liebevollen Abhaltens, wodurch in der Einheit die Zweiheit erhalten wird, und in diesem Anziehen und Abstoßen steigert sie sich zur Einheit von beiden, d. h. zum höchsten Bewußtseyn. Eben weil die ewige Freiheit [*sic*], kann sie sich gegen das Seyn nur als Nein, als Ja, und als Einheit beider verhalten. Denn es muß ausdrücklich erinnert werden, daß diese Unterschiede keine Unterschiede des Wesens, sondern nur des Verhaltens, der Beziehung des Einen Wesens gegen das Seyn sind. Aber auch umgekehrt, nur weil sie gegen das Seyn sich so verhält, ist sie die ewige Freiheit. Wäre sie bloß Ja oder Nein, so müßte sie sich auf eine oder andere Weise des Seyns annehmen, es bejahen oder verneinen. Daß sie beides ist, und beides gleich wesentlich, das eben macht, daß sie die höchste Freiheit ist. Dieß alles mußte seyn, damit nie ein nothwendiger Grund der Welt gefunden werde, und offenbar hervorleuchte, daß alles, was ist, nur durch den allerfreiesten göttlichen Willen sey." See also SW VII, 435-440 on two powers of God: love and wrath.

determination and spirit is what is subject to positive and internal determination.⁶⁰⁹ Nature, the material negatively determined world, strives towards pure spirit, towards freedom, the world of individuals determined solely from within; however, it doesn't reach this divine freedom and also does not transform itself into the spirit world, since it remains nature and necessity, its inertia still holding it back. Instead of becoming the spirit world, it meets spirit at a point where they are both bound through identity. This is the third potency, which Schelling also calls the eternal end, but only in the sense that the process of potentiation at this point ends *de facto*. It is as if Schelling makes a distinction between the concept of end as finishing-point and the concept of end as goal – it is fairly certain, according to Schelling, that what nature tends toward is the spirit world, yet spirit world is not where it ends. This is why Schelling differentiates between “desire for the end” (i.e. the intermediate state at which nature and the spirit world end without it) and “[desire] for what leads to the end and hence, negates itself as the end” (i.e. the spirit world, a state where inner determination reigns) in the *Weltalter* passage I have quoted earlier (SW VIII 224) – these two goals of desire are different. In other words: the spirit world is what is aimed at, but it is not the end as a finishing point, because Nature never fully goes over into the spirit world, and hence the goal is only ever reached partially, after which it ceases to be a goal. For the same reason, and although we can see from the above that the third potency is the middle term of the potency structure, Schelling refers to the second potency (A^2) as “the intermediate” (die Mittlere) in the *Weltalter*.⁶¹⁰ This relationship of lower, intermediate and higher potencies is, as I have already demonstrated in chapter II, merely relative: in comparison to the first potency A, the second potency is higher, and in the row A- A^2 - A^3 , A^2 is obviously the middle. Just as obviously, A^3 is the higher in the same row. It must be noted that in the *Weltalter* already, the *Potenzenlehre* is a structure with infinite layers.⁶¹¹ Hence A^3 is to be denoted as higher only in that sense, that it is the third –

609 SW VIII, 288 or for English, see *Ages of the World*, p. 65: “[A]lles was seine Einschränkung (verneinende Kraft) äußerlich hat, sey leiblich oder ein Körper; alles aber, was seine Einschränkung (die Kraft seines Bestehens) innerlich oder in sich habe, sey ein Geist.” - Schelling does not, however, think that a strict division can be made when it comes to discussing actually existing things, emphasising repeatedly the importance of intermediate concepts (e.g. SW VIII, 286): “Die mittleren Begriffe sind aber gerade die wichtigsten, ja die einzig eigentlich erklärenden in der ganzen Wissenschaft.”

610 SW VIII, 280 or for English, see *Ages of the World*, p. 59 – “Aber jene Bilder, die aus der untergeordneten Materie aufsteigen, gehen oder scheinen ihre Verwandtschaft wegen bis in das Mittlere (A^2), denn eben diese Bilder sind der Zauber, durch den es angezogen wird. Da nun zugleich das Mittlere in dieser Anziehung dem Höchsten (A^3) zum Gegenwurf wird, dieses mit der Gottheit ganz eins (nur ihr gegen die äußere Welt gewendetes Subjekt) ist: so ist offenbar, wie die von unten aufsteigenden Bilder durch das Mittlere auch dem Höchsten (A^3) und durch dieses der noch verborgenen Gottheit offenbar werden.”

611 SW VIII, 229-230 or for English, see *Ages of the World*, p. 20-21: “Wahrer Anfang ist, was Grund eines stetigen Fortschreitens ist, nicht einer abwechselnd vor- und zurückgehenden Bewegung. Ebenso ist nur das wahrhaftes Ende, worin ein Wesen besteht, von dem es nicht wieder auf den Anfang zurückzugehen braucht. Also können wir jenes erste blinde Leben auch erklären als ein solches, das weder seinen Anfang noch sein Ende finden kann; wir können in dieser Beziehung sagen, es sey ohne (wahrhaften) Anfang und ohne (wahrhaftes) Ende.”

sequentially higher in the potency progression, higher in the sense that it is actualised over and above the first two potencies it has as termini. Within the potency schema, there is, on one hand, ideal nature and pure necessity, and on the other – an absolute free spirit world. The second potency pulls the first towards itself; the first potency pulls back. The third potency stands in between as the point in which the powers of the first two potencies overlap: we end, so to speak, in an identity of nature and spirit, the only situation in which both can be active. This, according to Schelling's *Weltalter*, is divinity, not its freedom or its necessity,⁶¹² but the divine subject,⁶¹³ the whole – or, to be precise, the soul of the whole.⁶¹⁴ The whole is contingent; its soul, however, is that which animates the world – divinity. Now that we have seen how Schelling presents God in his writing – namely as the potentiation of the crossroads between two powers, the striving towards freedom and the inertia of necessity or love and wrath, we can return to our question of linearity and cyclicity in the *Potenzenlehre*. The question of the relationship between Schelling's conception of God presented above to process, time and eternity (so, to temporality in the broadest sense) poses itself anew. An analysis of the *Weltalter* brings us to the following surprising conclusion: it turns out that God is not related to the flowing temporality. It is impossible to read the *Weltalter* processually in a coherent way, i.e. as a text which describes a dynamic series of stages. The potencies described in the *Weltalter* are not stages at all. Despite all Schelling's claims that the *Weltalter* trace the becoming of a living being – “die Entwicklung eines lebendigen, wirklichen Wesen”⁶¹⁵ – they rather pose an eternal otherworldly⁶¹⁶ image of such alleged being. As I have already mentioned, the past in the *Weltalter* is an eternal past.⁶¹⁷ Similarly, the present and the future are equally eternal.⁶¹⁸ Schelling begins all drafts of the *Weltalter* as follows: “Das Vergangene wird gewußt, das Gegenwärtige wird erkannt, das Zukünftige wird geahnt. Das Gewußte wird erzählt, das Erkannte wird dargestellt, das Geahnte wird geweissagt.”⁶¹⁹ The

612 See *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen* on the bifurcation of God, SW VII, 425: “Eben in dem Streit und der Versöhnung beider soll sich unsere Menschheit bewähren. Wenn wir uns nun bewußt werden – wenn sich in uns Licht und Finsterniß scheiden –, so treten wir ja dadurch nicht aus uns hinaus, die beiden Principien bleiben doch in uns als ihrer Einheit. Wir verlieren nichts von unserem Wesen, sondern besitzen uns jetzt nur in gedoppelter Gestalt, nämlich einmal in der Einheit, das andremal in der Entzweiung. So Gott.” For English, see *Stuttgart Seminars*, p. 201. God can be one or bifurcated in his powers.

613 SW VIII, 242 or *Ages of the World*, p. 29.

614 SW VIII, 288 or *Ages of the World*, p. 65.

615 WA I, 3.

616 WA I, 5.

617 SW VIII, 254 or *Ages of the World*, p. 38.

618 See SW VIII 260 (*Ages of the World*, p. 43); and also fragment in WA III, 2: “[...] Gott sey ohne Anfang u. Ende, da man dafür sagen sollte, er sey ohne einen Anfang seines Anfangs u. ohne Ende seines Endes, d.h. daß er ewig anfangen u. ewig ende”. English: “God be without beginning or end, hence man can say to this that he be without a beginning of his beginning and without end of his end, i.e. that he begin eternally and end eternally.” Compare Schwarz, J.: “Die Lehre von Potenzen in Schellings Alterphilosophie”, in *Kant-Studien* 40/1-2 (1935) pp. 118-148, p. 133.

619 SW VIII, 199 or, for English, *Ages of the World*, p. xxxv.

first and only drafted book of the trilogy should have been on the past; yet Schelling could not separate a single “age” away from others, and so the book had to be structured differently. We have already seen the problem: it is impossible to explain a part of the *Potenzenlehre* – or, indeed, of the structure of the *Weltalter*, which is a version of the *Potenzenlehre* – apart from the others. This is exactly the paradox of the *Weltalter*, its perhaps most interesting feature and the reason for its failure – namely, the fact that the three ages of the world are no ages, but form a static whole, which is only whole at the level of eternity.⁶²⁰ Earlier in the *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*, God, considered absolutely, was explicitly made into the absolute identity of time and eternity – “absolute Identität von Ewigkeit und Zeit”⁶²¹ – and so it also is in the *Weltalter*, without Schelling spelling it out explicitly. In a certain sense the *Weltalter* present a static picture of a whole, which attempts to form an eternal structure; this structure is, in a certain way, simultaneously time and eternity.

Here we finally receive a clue as to how the cyclicity and linearity of the *Potenzenlehre* could hang together. God is being from all eternity,⁶²² and yet his revelation is temporal, unfolding in history.⁶²³ It is as if there can be two levels in Schelling’s potency texts: on one level there is the external (and, as we will see shortly, simultaneously necessary and impossible) glance onto the universe as a whole, exemplified by the *Weltalter*’s portrayal of the eternal elements of God, his structure, so to speak. The third draft of the *Weltalter* announces this plan unabashedly at its beginning when, in its very first section, it purports to examine “das ewige Leben der Gottheit als Ganzes oder Konstruktion der Gesamttidee Gottes”⁶²⁴ – the eternal life of the Godhead as a whole or construction of the entire idea of God. This “construction” in the *Weltalter* plays out almost like a divine topography – we are told what the nature of God is, what freedom in God is, and are given a sketch of the three potencies also “in the idea”, in their relation to each other. On the other level, there is the unfolding God, also announced within the *Weltalter* as Schelling moves to talk about the revelation of God, which he also calls “Sein-Aufnahme” – assumption of being. In that section, Schelling purports to look at the history of God’s actualisation – “die Geschichte der Verwirklichung oder der eigentlichen Offenbarungen Gottes”.⁶²⁵ This relation between the two levels, which is not explicitly expressed in Schelling, itself appears to be paradoxical: it is impossible for finite thought to

620 Schelling writes in the *Weltalter* (SW VIII, 310 or, for English, *Ages of the World*, p. 82): “Die Folge der Potenzen (dieß Wort in dem einmal festgesetzten Sinne genommen) verhält sich also auch als eine Folge von Zeiten. Dieses Gesetz allein ist fähig, den Organismus der Zeiten aufzuschließen.” This does not mean that the potency progression of the *Weltalter* is a temporal progression, but just that the potency progression gives a key to understanding of time. For time is, at the end of the day, the moving image of eternity. (Platon, *Timaios* 37d).

621 SW VII, 430.

622 SW VIII, 254 or *Ages of the World*, p. 34.

623 SW VIII, 305 or *Ages of the World*, p. 78.

624 See *Ages of the World*, p. v.

625 SW VIII 305 or *Ages of the World*, p. 78.

think the world – or God, for that matter – as a complete finished whole or a totality, it seems very unlikely that thinking would successfully construct the idea of God if this God needs to unfold in revelation in order to actualise Himself as a God, as Schelling repeatedly notes⁶²⁶ – and yet such a way of thinking is apparently the entire point of the first part of the *Weltalter*, which moreover involves adopting a view upon God as if from the outside, laying the idea of God out as if on a dissecting table. But an attempt to think the God as a totality fails because this attempt requires us to take a stand and consider, as if from the outside, an object of thinking which exceeds our thinking, a totality of which we are at least possibly, and very likely, a part of. Furthermore, against this “external stance” onto God, one could raise an objection similar to Markus Gabriel’s argumentation against the existence of the world, based on the logical impossibility of a complete exhaustive totality of things. Since according to Gabriel existence means existence in a milieu, in a domain, a totality could not exist – if it really were a totality, it would have no domain encompassing it in which to exist, and hence could simply not exist. If it were to exist, that would mean that it would have to have something outside of itself, and would hence not be a totality. For clarity, I quote Gabriel’s entire argument, as it appears in his *Sinn und Existenz*:

- 1 Zu existieren heißt, in einem Sinnfeld zu erscheinen.
- 2 Wenn die Welt existiert, erscheint sie in einem Sinnfeld.
- 3 Es gibt mehrere Sinnfelder (ontologischer Pluralismus).
- 4 Es gibt keine Gegenstände außerhalb der Welt (die Welt ist allumfassend).
- 5 Was in einem Sinnfeld erscheint, ist ein Gegenstand.
- 6 Gegenstände sind immer so-und-so (ontologischer Deskriptivismus)
- 7 Gegenstände überhaupt sind Gegenstände, die nicht unter einer bestimmten Beschreibung existieren.
- 8 Es gibt keine Gegenstände überhaupt. Gegenstände existieren nur in Sinnfeldern.
- 9 Die Welt kann nicht das Sinnfeld der Gegenstände überhaupt sein, da diese dann entgegen ihrer Definition unter der Beschreibung existieren, die das relevante Weltsinnfeld individuiert.
- 10 Also könnte sie nur ein Sinnfeld von Sinnfeldern sein. Da sie nach (4) allumfassend sein soll, muss sie das Sinnfeld aller Sinnfelder sein.
- 11 Wenn die Welt existiert, gibt es ein Sinnfeld, in dem die Welt erscheint. Damit gäbe es aber eine Beschreibung, unter der alles existiert, was es gibt, auch die Welt selber.
- 12 Eine solche Beschreibung gibt es nicht.

626 Remember — in the *Weltalter* Schelling equates God’s assumption of being with revelation.

∴ Die Welt existiert nicht.⁶²⁷

The complexity of the *Weltalter* drives even Schelling to confusion and towards a mistake: he attempts to present God as a process that unfolds out of itself, creating the world through its unfolding, and yet its idea is the idea of a whole, consisting of three elements, and not at all processual, but fully determined as to its structure. It can be replied that Schelling precisely intends to construct the *idea* of God and then show how that idea *actualises* itself in revelation, but that distinction is not rigorously maintained in the *Weltalter*. The reply might be acceptable – and yet if it weren't for Schelling's table of contents, we would not have known that, in the first section of the *Weltalter*, Schelling means to discuss the idea of God – within the text he only ever addresses “God” or “the Godhead” [Gottheit]. It is thoroughly difficult to establish whether the supposition – that Schelling wants to construct the idea of God and then show how it actualises itself – is at all sensible. Of course, it parallels his later presentation of positive and negative philosophy, whereby the negative attains the idea of God and the positive then traces its actualisation, i.e. revelation – but it is precisely the point that at the time of the *Weltalter*, Schelling had not yet formulated this insight. At the time of the *Weltalter* Schelling was still struggling to articulate the discrepancy between God as a negative idea and the unfolding revealing God. There are no methodological distinctions between these two approaches to God in the *Weltalter*, and so these two views of God are conflated and pushed together. When Schelling describes the process of an unfolding God and then switches to the level of the whole, he enacts a complete change of perspective, and yet he manages to remain oblivious to this shift, not differentiating between the two perspectives or acknowledging any shifting moves – as if he has accepted that, just as he had been thinking God as a whole, he is still attempting to describe Him – the already fully-present whole – in the same way in His unfolding.⁶²⁸ It is, despite this confusion, in a certain sense necessary to think about the completed idea of God for purpose of articulating the determinability of everything – this is

627 Gabriel, M.: *Sinn und Existenz*, Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2016, p.224. I translate it into English here with different formatting: “1. To exist means to appear in a field of sense. 2. If the world exists, it appears in a field of sense. 3. There are multiple fields of sense (ontological pluralism). 4. There are no objects outside the world (the world is all-encompassing). 5. What appears in a field of sense is an object. 6. Objects are always thus-and-so (ontological descriptivism). 6. Objects tout court are objects which do not exist under a definite determination. 7. There are no objects tout court. Objects exist only in fields of sense. 8. The world cannot be the field of sense of objects tout court, as these then would be, against their definition, exist under the description which individuates the relevant field of sense. 9. Thus, it could be the field of sense of all fields of sense. As it is all-encompassing according to (4), it must be the field of sense of all fields of sense. 10. If the world exists, all the fields of sense which appear in the world also exist. Thus there would be a description under which everything that exists exists, all the world itself. 11. Such a description does not exist. ∴ The world does not exist.”

628 For an exploration of this perspective, see *Spekulation und Faktizität*, pp. 41-42. Holz furthermore argues that God in Schelling's philosophy is not a God in becoming, but is the whole from the very beginning and that his revelation is what *becomes*. Therefore, God is, for Schelling, not “becoming”, but is outside time and space, while his proof is becoming. See *ibid.* pp. 160-161.

precisely why Schelling, after the failed project of the *Weltalter*, eventually finds a way to articulate those two perspectives onto God with the help of the positive-negative distinction and introduces the unprethinkable being into his philosophy – his “answer” to the transcendental ideal, to the *whole* of the Kantian philosophy, and gives it too the role of a regulative totality guaranteeing architectonic coherence to our cognition. We should remind ourselves at this point of Markus Gabriel’s *Transcendental Ontology*, much-quoted in this first chapter of this book – all things can only be determined as parts of a whole:

Things exist for us, therefore, only on the basis of an inexorable transcendence that is the very motor of reason itself. This is why we are compelled and obliged to conceptually anticipate the whole in order to guarantee the systematic unity of our empirical data processing: without an image of the whole in mind, no authority could be derived on the basis of which we could make true statements about the whole (let alone identify false ones).⁶²⁹

Thanks to Gabriel we understand that the idea of the whole can be logically incoherent if this whole is reified – but we have also seen that the whole is necessary for the ability of our reason to construct true predicative statements. Furthermore, Gabriel demonstrates in his first essay of *Transcendental Ontology*, that Kant and Schelling avoid the problems of reifying the whole (in the guise of the transcendental ideal or the unprethinkable), insofar as they localise the whole within the sphere of striving towards knowledge.⁶³⁰ When Schelling happens to ontologise the whole in his “middle-period” texts, like those of the *Identitätsphilosophie* and the *Weltalter* (we have discussed the necessity of this in the first chapter), he falls occasionally into precisely the same trap which he had avoided in his earlier texts (even already in the *Vom Ich als Prinzip der Philosophie*), and this is why it is important that in the latest iterations of his philosophy, neither the unprethinkable being, nor, even more obviously, the fact of being’s unprethinkability are reifications. The mistake of the *Weltalter* derives to a large extent from the very complex and abstract nature of the text: in it, it is not at all Schelling’s intention to merely present a totality, but rather to present God in a certain sense also as an object, so, from the “God’s eye view” onto God Himself – a doomed prospect.

In Schelling’s latest philosophy, the relation between the view of God as if from the outside and the internal unfolding of God (so between the inner and the outer levels of looking at God) is also the necessary condition for divine revelation. Schelling writes on this topic:

Wäre die Gottheit ewig wirklich (in dem hinlänglich bestimmten Sinn für äußerlich offenbar), so wäre sie nicht die Macht sich zu verwirklichen. Da sie aber doch nur aus ihrer freien Ewigkeit heraus sich verwirklichen kann, so muß, damit diese frei und unangetastet bleibe, zwischen der freien Ewigkeit und der That der

629 *Transcendental Ontology*, 11.

630 *Ibid.*: English: “Thus Schelling inherits from Kant the effort of localizing totality within the search for knowledge, that is, to conceive the whole as a crucial part of the dynamics of reflection, rather than as an extant entity.”

Verwirklichung etwas seyn, das diese von jener scheidet. Dieses etwas kann nur Zeit seyn, aber nicht Zeit in der Ewigkeit selbst, sondern ihr coexistirende Zeit.⁶³¹

God reveals to us within Himself something of His external eternity and thereby crosses a limitation, namely that of time. How this is to function exactly is unclear in Schelling. Perhaps it is unknowable, and, in any case, the issue of God crossing from eternity into time will be disregarded in the framework of this dissertation. No matter how Schelling had conceived to let God cross into time, history and revelation in the *Weltalter*, it had failed. Perhaps the inception of revelation is a problem Schelling cannot successfully address even later in his work; this is not a question for this dissertation to consider. In the second part of this chapter, we will avoid this problem of divine crossing into time and see how revelation can proceed in agreement with the *Potenzenlehre*.⁶³²

From this above discussion we can make two conclusions. First of all, we conclude that it is important to evaluate Schelling's engagement with God to make sure that he does not repeat the failure of the *Weltalter*. Second, a hypothesis can be formulated as to the two aspects of the *Potenzenlehre* – cyclicity and linearity. Due to the presence of two perspectives onto God in Schelling, the cyclicity and linearity of the *Potenzenlehre* can be said to be two perspectives from two different levels. Within the incomplete and incompletable chain of potencies, there are cyclical iterations without beginning or end, and yet the extrapolated “limits” of this chain form the beginning and end of God.⁶³³ The only piece of literature I found discussing this problematic of circularity and linearity is Hans Czuma's *Der philosophische Standpunkt*, where he reaches a similar conclusion and expresses it as follows: “lineare Wesen [also, Gott oder das Absolute – D.K.] verwirklicht sich in einer zyklischen Geschichte als zyklisch.”⁶³⁴ In its historical revelation, the absolute must always begin anew where it had begun previously. But what is the meaning of these beginnings and what would be the meaning of an end within the framework of the *Potenzlehre*? Do they stand in a relation to the potencies or are there unbridgeable gaps between the frame of these beginning and end on one hand and the

631 SW VIII, 306 or, for English, *Ages of the World*, p. 79-80: “Were the Godhead eternally actual (in the adequately determined meaning of “externally revealed”), then it would not be the power to actualize itself. But since the Godhead can only actualize itself from out of its free eternity, there must be something between free eternity and the deed of actualization that separates the deed from eternity so that eternity remains free and inviolable. This something can only be time, but not time within eternity itself, but rather time coexisting with eternity.”

632 It is perhaps useful here to look at an article by Yitzhak Melamed here, on eternity and necessity — Melamed argues in it that for Spinoza eternity is a modal notion, meaning self-necessitating existence, and hence it is not really temporal or atemporal, thus possibly giving a way to articulate both the eternity and unfolding of God. See Melamed, Y.: “Does Eternity Have a Future?”, in *The Philosophers' Magazine*, Issue 81, 2nd Quarter 2018, pp. 40-44.

633 For a good discussion of the dynamic of beginnings in the *Weltalter*, see *Spekulation und Faktizität*, pp. 76ff.

634 *Der philosophische Standpunkt*, p. 75. English: “Linear essence actualises itself in cyclical history as cyclical.”

Potenzenlehre on the other? In other words: is it the case that nothing begins with this beginning and nothing can reach this end? We could assume that the end, at least, could function like an attractor, something which was already hinted at multiple times in this text, but the question of what to do with the beginning we have discovered would remain, as it is beginning completely unintegrated into the *Potenzenlehre*, seen as if from without. Such a view is problematic especially in light of the understanding this chapter has arrived at so far, namely that an “unperspectival perspective” on God or onto a whole as if “from without” is inconsistent and questionable. In light of these considerations we can now establish that the linearity of the *Potenzenlehre*, the “frame” of beginning and end, ultimately even God – these “things”, when considered as if from without, from outside the world, are all ideal attractors. The pantheistic claim of the *Freiheitsschrift*: “Denn so möchte wohl nicht zu leugnen seyn, daß, wenn Pantheismus weiter nichts als die Lehre von der Immanenz der Dinge in Gott bezeichnete, jede Vernunftansicht in irgend einem Sinn zu dieser Lehre hingezogen werden muß”⁶³⁵ is still applicable for later Schelling writings. The structure which we here call “God” is immanent to the operation of the potencies, but is also a transcendent attractor, existing before and outside all determination.⁶³⁶ This beginning is inaccessible in thought since we always begin in the middle – and so does the world. The end is equally unattainable since the world also has its end in the middle. Since the entire potency chain is positioned in the middle of the world-processes in its self-actualisation, there are no gaps within it. The gap between it and its beginning, as well as that between it and its end, is ideal – like that between an attractor and what it attracts; those gaps also point to essential attributes of philosophy for Schelling, namely its incompleteness or ungroundedness, as well as the openness of the world as a system and of the system of thought, which reflects the world. The beginning and the end of the world, just like the ground and the final end of thinking are inaccessible and unthinkable. A situation at a time t cannot be taken as part of a potency chain if the antecedent of the situation at time $t-1$ and the consequent of the situation at $t+1$ are somehow taken to belong outside the world in which the situation at t is. We cannot somehow speak of the antecedents and consequents of the world as being outside the world. As long as we are talking of the world at all, we cannot speak of a totality, and there is no place for God (at least the way He is considered in the *Weltalter*) in an anti-totalitarian ontological register. To recall the introduction: as Schelling attempts to formulate the openness of his system, he also attempts to express the inexpressible, due the tension between the principle of thoroughgoing determination and the openness of his philosophical system. The expression of the

635 SW VII, 339 or *PI*, p. 11: “For thus it should likely not be denied that, if pantheism denotes nothing more than the doctrine of the immanence of things in God, every rational viewpoint in some sense must be drawn to this doctrine.”

636 At the end of this chapter we will see how Schelling treats both those aspects of God.

inexpressible can (if only preliminarily) be achieved through concepts which point to outside of themselves. The breaks between the potency chain on one side and its own absolute beginning and end on the other are inexpressible, and this is what Schelling's late philosophy points to. As I have already demonstrated with the help of Petr Rezvykh's work, Schelling circles in his late work around the same fundamental question, which he approaches through various structures and terminologies; he can exhibit the breaks, pointing to them, precisely through this circling. The *Weltalter* were his only prominent attempt to approach the breaks directly and to present them exactly in the way in which he has presented other topics. This attempt has failed, nevertheless it could direct us to a possible solution. This possible solution of Schelling's *Weltalter* problem is as follows: God cannot be considered as a completed whole, in exact parallel to everything else, because nothing can be considered as a completed whole. The openness of a system remains a crucial principle, and is even the condition of the system. Following the failure of the *Weltalter*, a text which one way or another had sealed the fate of its particular way of addressing God, Schelling turns to God's historical aspects in his later works (i.e. he turns to divine revelation), and he withdraws even further from various totalising investigations. In what follows, I will examine this Schellingian move closer and finally look at the place God occupies in the late *Potenzenlehre* texts. I have already demonstrated that the view from without onto God as a whole is impossible through an examination of the *Weltalter*. I will now turn to investigating to what extent this external view and the externality itself are necessary, also by steering closer to the subject matter of the rest of this work – through an examination of the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* and the *Andere Deduktion der Prinzipien der Positiven Philosophie*. It will turn out that God is not only not a thing, but also not a power, and that Schelling positions God as the necessary condition of the potencies' unfolding development.⁶³⁷

II The Four Causes

Of all texts of the Schellingian *Potenzenlehre*, the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* is perhaps the most confusing. The lectures of that particular *Darstellung* put forth, on one

⁶³⁷ In 1830 in the *Darstellung des Philosophischen Empirismus* Schelling writes on God: "Wir führen also mit dem Begriff Gott keinen neuen, noch nicht bewiesenen Begriff ein, wir nennen nur Gott, was wir schon in nothwendiger Folge erkannt haben, die Ursache, die allgemein und im ganzen Weltproceß zunächst dem Subjektiven über das Objektive, entfernter also dem Idealen über das Reale den Sieg verleiht. Wir treffen in dieser Definition des Wortes Gott, die unstreitig eine reellere und mehr in sich schließende ist als alle gewöhnlichen, auch wieder mit Platon zusammen, inwiefern er sagt: Gott sey die Ursache nicht des Guten, sondern des Besseren." (SW X, 255). English: "With the concept of God we are not introducing any new, as of yet unproven concept; we only call God what we have acknowledged in the necessary consequence: the cause, which gives, generally and in the world process as a whole, the victory to the subjective over the objective at first and to the ideal over the real later. We meet God with this definition of the word, which is more real than all the usual ones, and also encompasses more; we side again with Plato insofar as he says: God is not the cause of the good, but of the better." Hence God is, so to speak, a transcendental condition of all betterment, all development.

hand, a potency dialectic, but on the other, they attempt to formulate an oddly speculative reading of the Aristotelian doctrine of the four causes. The *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* is, to put it bluntly, an attempt to map the Aristotelian four causes onto the *Potenzenlehre*. This is, at a first glance, an at least questionable enterprise, since the potencies form a triad, while the causes are trivially four in number. Hence Schelling introduces the fourth cause (final cause) into the potency structure, and relates it to God. This relation is, however, not that of full correspondence – God is not the final cause of this or that thing, but the absolute ultimate *telos*:

Diese vierte Ursache [Schelling meint hier die Finalursache eines individuellen Dinges – *D.K.*] – denn wir werden uns dieser Bezeichnung um so unbedenklicher bedienen, als sie uns schon von Aristoteles her bekannt ist – diese Ursache kann nicht Gott seyn. Denn theils wäre dieß ganz gegen die Vorschrift, die wir uns selbst für diese Wissenschaft gegeben, in der Gott nur Ziel, absolut letzte Endursache seyn kann (denn es ist kein Widerspruch, eine Mehrheit von Endursachen zu denken, da jedes Folgende zum Vorhergehenden sich so verhält).⁶³⁸

So, although Schelling says that although the fourth, final cause, in the way in which Aristotle uses it, is not identical with God in his philosophy, God is nevertheless the ultimate *telos*. In relation to the final cause in this mapping, Malte Krüger has an ingenious way of reading the *Potenzenlehre*: according to him, the first potency is *causa materialis*, the second is *causa formalis*, and the third is *causa finalis*, the efficient cause being left out of the picture.⁶³⁹ This fits in with the *Potenzenlehre* as presented as chapter II: the first potency is matter, the second communicates form to matter, and the third is the product towards which the first and the second tend. And yet, with the above passage and Krüger's reading, we are still far from our goal of finding the role of God in the *Potenzenlehre*,⁶⁴⁰ although we know that God is not the *telos* of an individual potency triad, but the ultimate *telos* of the whole. Furthermore, God is in a certain sense a cause, namely the cause of the unity of all that, which has being:

Theils aber ist auch das nicht zu leugnen, daß wir eine natürliche Abneigung empfinden, Gott als eine der Ursachen zu bestimmen, da wir vielmehr geneigt sind, ihn als absolute Ursache, d. h. die auch Ursache der Ursachen ist, zu denken. Unstreitig zwar werden wir die vierte Ursache, zu der sich die drei als Werkzeuge und demnach als relativ nicht seyende zu verhalten scheinen, als diejenige bestimmen, die jene ist, wie wir von Gott sagten, daß er das Seyende ist. Aber eben hier ist auch der Unterschied. Gott ist dem Seyenden Ursache seiner Einheit:

638 SW XI, 399-400. English: "This fourth cause [Schelling means the final cause of one or another individual thing – *D.K.*] – for we will avail ourselves of this designation the more unproblematically, as we know it already from Aristotle – this cause cannot be God. This partly would have been against the prescription which we ourselves have given to this science, that in God can lie only the goal, absolute ultimate final cause (for it is not a contradiction to think of a plurality of final causes, as each consequent relates to antecedents in this way)."

639 *Göttliche Freiheit*, p. 133.

640 See *ibid.*

anderes ist für uns in dem Vorhergehenden nicht begründet; jene Ursache dagegen setzt das zertrennte, in seine Elemente auseinandergetretene Seyende voraus; ihr Verhältniß zu den Ursachen wird auch das Verhältniß des sie seyenden seyn, aber des sie in ihrem Auseinandergehen seyenden.⁶⁴¹

God unifies all that has being within the framework of a principle, but this principle through which God unifies, is actuality: at the coming end, all potencies will be actualised and none suppressed.⁶⁴² At the beginning of the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* Schelling writes, concerning the three potencies, that none of them taken alone is that which has being. He asks: what is that which has being? The answer is obvious, all the more so in light of this current work: the three potencies together. But even the three potencies together are not really that which has being; they *are* only as material possibilities (to use Buchheim's terminology) or "in the idea", as Schelling puts it.⁶⁴³ Within the framework of the positive philosophy, it is thanks to God that they are raised into actuality – and this raising is not a transformation from

641 SW XI, 400. English: "Partly however it is not to be denied that we encounter a natural aversion to determine God as one of the causes, since we rather tend to think of him as an absolute cause, i.e. also the cause of causes. We would however indisputably determine the fourth cause, to which the three seem to relate as tools, and hence as relatively non-being, as that which, as we said of God, is what has being. But precisely here there also is a difference. God is for those things which have being, the cause of their unity: for us, nothing else is grounded in the antecedent; each cause, by contrast, posits that what has being as separated and divided into its separating elements; its relation to the causes will also be the relation of what it is they are, but of what they are in their division."

642 After the *Freiheitsschrift* and the *Weltalter* the unifying factor is divine love. This love is the actualisation of all possibilities, a state where everything is decided and exists together in unity: "Existenz ist Eigenheit, ist Absonderung; die Liebe aber ist das Nichts der Eigenheit, sie sucht nicht das ihre und kann darum auch von sich selbst nicht existierend seyn." – WA I, 34. English: "Existence is particularity, it is separation; love, however, is the naught of particularity, it does not seek its own and can hence also of itself be non-existing". See also WA I, 103: "Liebe ist der Antrieb zu aller Entwicklung. Liebe bewegt das Urwesen zur Aufgebung der Verslossenheit. Denn nicht äußerlich bloß, innerlich wird die zusammenziehende Kraft überwunden." English: "Love is the impetus to all development. Love moves the originary essence to the surrendering of the closedness. For it is not only outwardly, but inwardly the contracting powers are overcome." It is also important to remark: after the *Freiheitsschrift* Schelling takes the actualised state of divine love as that, which comes after the end of the world. Hence we could only think about it as an ideal.

643 SW XI, 291: "Wenn dem so ist, wenn nicht 1 (denn auch so wird erlaubt seyn, jedes Moment durch die ihm entsprechende Zahl zu bezeichnen), wenn nicht 1, nicht 2, nicht 3 das Seyende ist, so entsteht von selbst die Frage: was ist das Seyende? Denn dieses, das Seyende, können wir nicht aufgeben, nachdem wir es mit allem versucht, das das Seyende seyn konnte (hier zeigt sich, was durch die Einschränkung des unbestimmten Kantischen Begriffs eines Inbegriffs aller Möglichkeit gewonnen ist). Darauf (was das Seyende?) könnte man antworten: wenn keines für sich, werden alle zusammen das Seyende seyn. Allerdings das Seyende - wir könnten auch sagen: das Absolute (quod omnibus numeris absolutum est), außer dem nichts möglich ist -, aber das Seyende nur materiell, dem Stoff nach, nicht wirklich, wie Aristoteles unterscheidet, oder das Seyende im Entwurf, die bloße Figur oder Idee des Seyenden, nicht es selbst. (Bemerken Sie gelegentlich die ursprüngliche, die eigentliche Bedeutung des vielgebrauchten und mißbrauchten Worts: Idee)." English: "If it so, if not 1 (for thus it will be allowed to represent each moment through the corresponding number), if not 1, not 2, not 3 are that which has being, then the question arises by itself: what is that which has being? For we cannot give up this, that which has being, after we have tried this with everything which could be that which has being. (here it is shown what has been gained through the limitation of the indefinite Kantian concept of the sum of all possibility). To this (what is that which has being?) one could answer: if nothing were that which has being for itself, then everything together would be it. Certainly that which has being (we could also say: the absolute (quod omnibus numeris absolutum est), outside of which nothing is possible) is only *materially*, according to its matter, not *actually*, as Aristotle distinguishes, or is that-which-has-being in outline, as mere figure or idea of that-which-has-being, not it itself. (Notice in this instance the originary, true meaning of the much-used and misused word idea)." See also SW XI, 313 and generally lecture 13.

nothing into being, but is due to the fact that God – as the actually existing and as that Whose essence (whatness) is His thatness, i.e. His existence – is the condition and guarantor of the fact that there be something and that something actualises itself.⁶⁴⁴ In the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* we also encounter the definition of God as the universal in that which has being:

Denn auf die Frage, was Gott ist, antworten wir zwar: er ist das Seyende. Aber Er Selbst ist nicht das Seyende, und weil alles Allgemeine oder Was in dem Seyenden enthalten, ist von ihm, wie er in Sich (in seinem reinen Selbst) ist, nicht mehr zu sagen, was er ist, sondern nur, daß er Ist.⁶⁴⁵

From the above it also follows that God is an individual⁶⁴⁶ – at least for the positive philosophy. In the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* as well, Schelling draws the distinction between positive and negative philosophies. The negative, purely rational philosophy, begins with definite principles and seeks God, among other things, through those principles. The positive philosophy begins with existence, i.e. with divine existence (insofar as in it the unprethinkable being is Schelling's counterpart to the Kantian *ens realissimum*), the source of actuality (that whose whatness is its thatness),⁶⁴⁷ and the actuality of the elements of this source which is God:

644 Note: it is important here to nevertheless not draw a facile identification between God and unprethinkable being. To repeat: unprethinkable being is being qua preceding thought, grounding thought and not encompassed by thought. I am not prepared to comment in detail on the nature of God for Schelling, but he is most definitely, as can be seen by this entire ongoing investigation, much more than that.

645 SW XI, 402. English: "As to the question what God is, we answer: it is that which has being. But it itself is not that which has being and since everything universal or what is contained in what has being is from him, as he is in himself (in his pure self), there is nothing more to say about what he is, but only that he is."

646 The question of whether the principles of philosophy, the soul, the world-soul and God are as individuals or universally is important to Schelling, although it is not the main topic of the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie*. Schelling tackles this question in relation to the Aristotelian four causes, which seem to be simultaneously individual and universal. The three potencies are like this as well: different elements of the One, but they are universal in the sense that they can be applied to different phenomena, i.e., that they are, as has already been explained, functions. See on this topic lecture 13 in the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie*.

647 SW XI, 565-566: "Denn negativ ist jene [die negative Philosophie], weil es ihr nur um die Möglichkeit (das Was) zu thun ist, weil sie alles erkennt, wie es unabhängig von aller Existenz in reinen Gedanken ist; zwar werden in ihr existierende Dinge deducirt (sonst wäre sie nicht Vernunft –, d. h. apriorische Wissenschaft, denn das a priori ist dieß nicht ohne ein a posteriori), aber es wird in ihr darum nicht deducirt, daß die Dinge existiren; negativ ist jene, weil sie auch das Letzte, das an sich Actus (daher gegenüber von den existierenden Dingen überexistierend) ist, nur im Begriff hat. Positiv dagegen ist diese; denn sie geht von der Existenz aus, von der Existenz d. h. dem actu Actus-Seyn des in der ersten Wissenschaft als nothwendig existierend im Begriff (als naturâ Actus seyend) Gefundenen. Dieses hat sie zuerst nur als reines Daß (Ev τ), von welchem zum Begriff, dem Was (dem Seyenden) fortgegangen wird, um das so Existierende bis an den Punkt zu führen, wo es sich als wirklichen (existenten) Herrn des Seyns (der Welt), als persönlichen, wirklichen Gott erweist [...]" English: "For the negative philosophy is negative because it has to do only with the possibility (the What), because it cognizes everything as independent from all existence in pure thinking. Indeed, in it existing things are deduced (otherwise it would not have been reason, i.e. aprioristic science, for an a priori is not without a posteriori), but it would not be deduced in it that they exist. It is negative because it also contains the last, the Actus in-itself (hence over-existing vis-a-vis its the existing things) only in concept. The other one is positive, for it starts from existence, from existence, i.e. from the actu Actus-being of what is found in the first science as necessarily existing in the concept (als naturâ Actus seyend). This it has at first merely as mere that (Ev τ), from which it will

[...] in den Elementen ist die Einheit nur auf die erste Weise, in dem Einen selbst (denn so können wir es auch nennen, wie wir es das Seyende selbst genannt haben), in diesem also ist die Einheit auf die andere Weise und unzerstörlich, weil in ihm gar nichts Möglichen seyn kann, weil es unüberwindliche und unauflöbliche Einzelheit ist, Einzelwesen wie kein anderes; die Einzelheit allein hält Stand, alles andere ist dissolubel.⁶⁴⁸

The divine actuality – and the role of God as its source, and not a principle, make God into a person, as we can see in the *Philosophie der Offenbarung*:

Der Gott, in dessen Gewalt es steht, auch das außergöttliche Seyn zu setzen oder nicht zu setzen, der Gott, *in cujus potestate omnia sunt* (nämlich *omnia quae praeter ipsum existere possunt*), dieser Gott ist also der ganze Gott, nicht bloß eine Gestalt Gottes, sondern Gott als absolute Persönlichkeit.⁶⁴⁹

The exact meaning of “person” is not articulated clearly in Schelling. To avoid derailing our investigation further, I will not occupy myself extensively with the definition of “person” here either and turn to scholarship, which can on this occasion provide a fine definition. According to Temilo van Zantwijk’s book *Pan-Personalismus*, the person is defined as a unity of principles.⁶⁵⁰ Thomas Buchheim goes a step further: “Person ist, was sich in Natur als individueller Geist offenbart” – what reveals itself in nature as individual spirit is person.⁶⁵¹ Since spirit for Schelling is a unity of principles,⁶⁵² the person is then this unity which acts in nature and reveals itself to other such unities. Christian Danz makes human personality out to be the actualisation of God’s personality and relates the idea of God as a person to Schelling’s *Anthropologisches Schema*, a short text in which Schelling describes the human “personality” in the psychological sense as a unity of understanding, will and spirit.⁶⁵³ According to each of those definitions, personality is a certain unity of powers – it is also defined thus according to the first draft of the *Weltalter*, where each of the three persons of the trinity are a certain

be proceeded to the concept, to the what (that which has being), in order to drive the existent to the point, where it demonstrates itself as actual (existing) Lord of being (the world), as personal, actual God [...]

648 SW XI, 313. English: “[...] in the elements unity is only in the first way, but in the One itself (for we could also call it thus, as we have called that which has being itself) unity is in another way, and it is indestructible, because it is an insurmountable and indissoluble singularity, a singular being unlike other. The singularities alone persist, all else is dissoluble.”

649 SW XIII, English: *GPP*, p. 311. “God, in whose power it is, also to posit or not to posit the being outside of God, God *in cujus potestate omnia sunt* (namely *omnia quae praeter ipsum existere possunt*), this God is also the entire God, not merely a form of God, but God as absolute personality.”

650 Van Zantwijk, T.: *Pan-Personalismus*, Paderborn: 2009, p. 215, [cited henceforth as *Pan-Personalismus*].

651 Buchheim, T.: “Grundlinien von Schellings Personbegriff”. In Buchheim, T. und Hermanni, F. (Ed.): “*Alle Persönlichkeit ruht auf einem dunkeln Grunde*“. *Schellings Philosophie der Personalität*, Berlin: 2004, pp. 11-34, here p. 20.

652 SW VII, 364: “Das aus dem Grunde der Natur emporgehobene Princip, wodurch der Mensch von Gott geschieden ist, ist die Selbstheit in ihm, die aber durch ihre Einheit mit dem idealen Princip Geist wird. Die Selbstheit als solche ist Geist, oder der Mensch ist Geist als ein selbstisches, besonderes (von Gott geschiedenes) Wesen, welche Verbindung eben die Persönlichkeit ausmacht.” For English, see *PI*, p. 33.

653 Ibid. 188.

balance of affirming and denying forces.⁶⁵⁴ In any case, it seems like the concept of person refers to an actual, i.e. active unity of powers.

Negative philosophy concerns itself, on the other hand, not with actuality, but considers God merely as a principle. Schelling symbolises this principle as A^0 ,⁶⁵⁵ and he denotes the final cause of something, which he also calls the “soul” of that something, by a^0 .⁶⁵⁶ The main point of this distinction is that the initial unity of being will become actual through God, also as a principle. Besides that initial unity, being, having already undergone division through potencies and principles, is, due to its individuation, no longer unified through God, but through a principle of unification and individuation which is a^0 – a soul which is no longer the principle of unification of all being. Nevertheless, the world is and becomes only outside of God in a limited sense, as different from God, but not separate from him:

[...] die Welt, zu der wir fortgeschritten sind, ist nur eine von Gott verschiedene, nicht geschiedene, außergöttlich im ideellen, nicht im reellen Sinn, existentia praeterdivina, nicht extradivina.⁶⁵⁷

We should here remark that this step can be understood both ontologically and epistemologically. On one hand, this could be an ontological set-up in which the individuating force, active in every individual thing, wins over the unifying power in God. This reading would take it that the individuating force causes the world to veer away from God and that every thing is simultaneously individuated and united with everything else through its “soul” (i.e. through its unifying principle), or perhaps the world through the world-soul.⁶⁵⁸ On the other hand this step can be read as the epistemological impossibility to understand the world as a whole, at least as soon as one divides it into its parts and treats those parts as objects in a theoretical approach. In other words, since one of the goals of the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* (which is also an investigation into Aristotelian philosophy and a theoretical examination of some central mythological concepts) is a demarcation of the territories of positive and negative philosophies through an elucidation of negative philosophy, then the transition from God to the soul as a unifying principle can mean that one begins to consider the world from the point of view of this negative philosophy: the divine unity with which positive philosophy had begun is no longer there. Since I have shown, already in the introduction, that Schelling can be read ontologically as well as epistemologically and that this work is to consider the flexibility of Schellingian texts as conceptual richness and not a weakness, I will not here settle the interpretation of the question in one or another direction.

654 See WA I, 122-123 and WA II, 115-116.

655 See e.g. SW XI 489.

656 See e.g. SW XI, 399 and 417.

657 SW XI, 413. English: “[...] the world, to which we have progressed, is only different from God, not divorced from it, outside of God in the ideal, not in the real sense, existentia praeterdivina, nicht extradivina.”

658 See SW VII, 365-366 on the initiation of creaturely will.

However the above can be read, the “divided” being is no longer united through God, but through the soul (a⁰).⁶⁵⁹

Das was Ist, oder inwiefern man sich dieses als vorausgehend denkt, das was war seyn, dieses ist der Grundbegriff, die Natur der vierten Ursache, das wodurch sie sich über das bloße Seyende erhebt, wodurch allein sie also auch vermögend ist das zertrennte Seyende zusammenzuhalten, damit etwas entstehe. Nichts also, wozu diese Ursache nicht mitwirkt, wenn sie gleich in das Gewordene nur in dem Verhältniß eintritt, als dieses ihr durchsichtig geworden. Denn es selbst, dieses Vierte, ist nicht einem Theil des Seyenden, sondern dem ganzen Seyenden gleich, und kann daher in die Dinge als Seele, als sie seyend, nur in dem Maß eintreten, als diese das ganze Seyende in sich ausdrücken, das auf den tieferen Stufen des Werdens noch als zertrennt und zerrissen erscheint.⁶⁶⁰

Despite this disjoint character of being, this “Zerrissenheit” – diremption – all that has being tends ultimately to God, to the potency A⁰ – all that has being has the same destination:

Aber allen Dingen, also auch den unbeseelten, ist das Wohin gemein, einem jeden in der Bewegung zur Seele das, wodurch es zum Ganzen gehört und selbst ein Ganzes ist. Also, wenn es auch, daß ich so sage, in seinem Materiellen die Seele nicht erreicht, in seiner Bewegung ist sie ihm und als Ziel, es selbst daher doch eine Darstellung oder Bild der vier Principe.⁶⁶¹

God stands as the absolute end. Like the transcendental ideal in Kant, God is, in Schelling’s philosophy, the ground of determination and the cause of being for what has being – “dem Seyenden Ursache des Seyns”⁶⁶² – on one hand, while being the ground of possibility on the other:

Als wir zuerst von dieser alles anfangenden Potenz sprachen, gehörte sie zu der künftigen, noch bloß in Gedanken vorhandenen Materie des göttlichen Existirens; nachdem sie des Seyns, nicht des eigenen, aber des göttlichen, theilhaft geworden, ist ihr das eigene zur Möglichkeit geworden.⁶⁶³

To this last sentence and point, there is a footnote explaining that God is indeed the ground of all actuality:

659 The relation between soul and God is examined in the 18th lecture of the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie*. See SW XI, 418-419. From the point of view of infinity, the soul comes closer to God – the 24th lectures shows us the possibility a human soul has before it for reaching God, namely through positive philosophy. See SW XI, 558-559.

660 SW XI, 407-408. English: “That which is, or insofar as we think it as antecedent, that which was being, this is the ground concept, the nature of the fourth cause, that through which it raises itself over that which merely has being and through which it alone is able to hold together the separated existent, so that something arise, as it becomes clear to it. For it itself, this fourth, is not equal to a part of that which has being, but to all of it, and can hence enter things as soul, as it is only insofar as these express that which has being in their entirety, what on the deepest level of becoming still appears as separated and dirempted.” See also SW XI, 412, where the soul is called an “actuality, excluding all that is potential” – “alles Potentielle ausschließende Wirklichkeit”.

661 SW XI, 432. English: “But the destination is common to all things, also the non-souled, to each also in the movement towards the soul through which it belongs to the whole and is itself a whole. Thus, when it also doesn’t reach the soul in that which is material to it, in its movement the soul is it, and it itself hence a presentation or image of the four principles.”

662 SW XI, 391.

663 SW XI, 387. English: “As we at first spoke of this all-beginning potency, it belonged to the futural matter of the divine existence, still present only in thought; after it has partly become the matter of being, not of its own, but of the divine, its own being turns to possibility.”

Ueber den Inhalt der letzten Stelle findet sich im philosophischen Tagebuch (Kalend. 1853) des selben Verfassers noch folgende Erklärung:

– $A + A \pm A$ sind nur das nicht Wirkliche, aber nicht das nicht Seyende; sie sind nicht οὐκ οντά, sondern bloß μη όντα. Denn es ist eine passive Möglichkeit in ihnen, όντα zu werden. Sie erhalten Wirklichkeit (durch A^0), aber nur als theilnehmend an der Wirklichkeit, an A^0 , nicht als selbstwirkliche, während sie vor A^0 im bloßen Denken als selbstseyend gedacht, - freilich nur Potenzen waren. Damit aber (daß sie Wirklichkeit durch A^0 erhalten) ist ihnen wieder eine Möglichkeit gegeben, zu selbstwirklichen zu werden (eine eigne Wirklichkeit anzunehmen). So ist ihnen also die Selbstwirklichkeit vermittelt.⁶⁶⁴

On the other hand, God is the final cause of everything:

Wir haben gesehen, wie alle Dinge von Natur in einer Bewegung gegen das Höchste, und wie insofern nun jedes gleichsam außer sich gesetzt ist. Allem bloß Materiellen, das eines es seyenden bedarf um zum Seyn zu gelangen, ist es durch seine Natur auferlegt, sich in dem ihm Jenseitigen aufzuheben, um des wahren Seyns theilhaftig zu werden.⁶⁶⁵

Inside the fundamental onto-epistemological system which Schelling gradually constructs, we find the following set-up: negative philosophy strives towards the end, the *ens realissimum*; both the end and the striving unite thought architectonically.⁶⁶⁶ The end is never reached, and neither is the need of the negative philosophy to become transparent to itself, to fully turn itself into its own object of inquiry, fulfilled. The positive philosophy then begins exactly at this “end”, at the *ens realissimum*, actually existing as an individual, as a person and thus as a source of actuality for other things. The dynamic which we have observed at other points in

664 Ibid. English: “We find a further clarification concerning the contents of this last point in the philosophical notebooks (year 1853) of the same author: – $A + A \pm A$ are merely the non-actual, but not the non-existent; they are not οὐκ οντά, but merely μη όντα. For they have a passive possibility in them to become όντα. They receive actuality (through A^0), but only as partaking in the actuality, in A^0 , not as self-actual, while they are thought in mere thought as being in and of themselves before A^0 , although of course they were only potencies. With this, however (which them receiving actuality through A^0) a possibility is once again given to them to become self-actual (to assume their own actuality). So self-actuality is also conveyed to them”. For more textual evidence as to the point that God is for Schelling the source of actuality, we can turn to the *Darstellung des Philosophischen Empirismus*. I would like to quote a passage (SW X, 254) as an example: “Jene Ursache, auf deren Begriff wir nun durch die bloße Thatsache, die freilich keine Thatsache des gemeinen, sondern selbst schon des philosophischen Bewußtseyns und nur das veredelte Resultat selbst wissenschaftlicher Erfahrung ist, geleitet worden sind, – jene Ursache nun also kann nicht unbekannt seyn, denn sie ist augenscheinlich die wahre Ursache alles wirklichen Seyns. Sie muß also in jeder Sprache eine Benennung haben. Die einzige in der Sprache vorhandene Benennung, welche wir dem Begriff jener Ursache angemessen glauben können, der wir das Übergewicht des Subjektiven über das Objektive zuschreiben, ist der Name Gott.” English: “This cause, to whose concept we are now directed through sheer fact, which is certainly no fact of the general consciousness, but itself already fact of the philosophical consciousness and can only be the refined result of scientific experience itself – this cause now cannot be unknown, for it is manifestly the true cause of all actual being. It must thus have a name in every language. The only name, present in language, which we can believe to be commensurate to the concept of this cause, the concept which ascribes the preponderance of the subject over the objective, is the name God.”

665 SW XI, 422. English: “We have seen how all things are set naturally in a movement against the highest, and how thus each is similarly set outside of itself. On everything merely material, which requires that which has being in order to attain being, it is imposed to sublimate itself to the beyond, in order to partly become true being.”

666 For more on God as the limit of possibility and end of motion, see Daniel Sollberger’s *Metaphysik und Invention*, p. 220-225.

Schelling's works arises here again: God is taken to be the ground of everything, including negative philosophy, while negative philosophy grounds God in thought and thus demonstrates its necessity as architectonic unifier.⁶⁶⁷ This double series of real and ideal grounds, which is the true crucial point of onto-epistemology, underpins the relation which the potencies, i.e. originally abstract possibilities, have to actuality. Thanks to this grounding relation between potencies and actuality, the potencies and their triads stop being mere abstractions and become what Schelling calls "Idea".⁶⁶⁸ The structure presented above shows a deep intertwining between existence and the principles of understanding. It is described in detail at the end of the 20th lecture of the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie*⁶⁶⁹ and goes approximately as follows: our cognition strives to find the principles of that which has being – this, however, cannot be accomplished if it stops at abstraction, so it goes further and grounds abstraction in actuality, investigating that which has being as opposed to merely setting up pure dialectical schemes. This investigation is directed by the unifying architectonic principle: God is thus, for Schelling, also the grounding principle of intelligibility; He is what guarantees that being is intelligible. So, just as the principles of that which has being are translated into actuality, as we have already seen in the previous chapter, through their groundedness in the ontologising principle of intelligibility, which has become the principle of actuality, the possibilities of kinds of being become causes – "die Möglichkeiten (die Arten des Seyenden) werden zu Ursachen [...]".⁶⁷⁰

This unity of intelligibility and actuality, of the principle and what has being, is treated extensively in the *Darstellung des philosophischen Empirismus* of 1830 as the unity of the subjective and the objective, where "subjective" and "objective" are taken predominantly to mean "knower" and "known" or "determining" and "subject to determination" which, it must be noted, is used in the exactly opposite sense from the notions of "subjectivity" and "objectivity" in the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*⁶⁷¹ and discussed in chapter II:

[...] er [Gott] ist Einheit des Subjektiven und Objektiven als Ursache, und zwar zugleich mit der ausdrücklichen Bestimmung, diese Einheit so zu seyn, daß er dem einen Princip das Uebergewicht über das andere ertheilt.⁶⁷²

667 For more on God in the positive and negative philosophies, see footnote to page 559 in *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* and SW XI, 565-566 on the transition from the negative to positive, an active God, religion and the practical need to strive towards God. For the negative philosophy, the soul (a⁰) is a principle. In the positive philosophy it is overcome as a principle and set in connection with God (SW XI, 488).

668 SW X, 256.

669 See SW XI, 489.

670 SW XI, 489.

671 Schelling indeed uses the word "subject" in two different senses in his late philosophy. Marcela Garcia discusses his usage of these two senses in *Significance of Aristotle* pp. 153-157.

672 SW X, 256. English: "[...] he [God] is the unity of the subjective and objective as a cause, and at the same time with the explicit determination to be this unity such that preponderance of one principle over the other ensues." In the *Darstellung des Philosophischen Empirismus* Schelling once again presents a double series, as a series of the objective and the subjective, i.e. closer to his earlier writings. Philosophy as Naturphilosophie

In the *Darstellung des philosophischen Empirismus* God is presented as the principal unity of the indeterminate and the determination, the unlimited and the limitation.⁶⁷³ Everything that is is a certain way in which the undetermined is connected to determination, and God is no reified instance of such a connection, but its condition. Since he is the condition of determination of everything, he is also the condition of actual existence of everything that exists, and also itself a unity. As the condition of both existence and determination, the *Was* and the *Das*, he is neither positive nor negative, but lies at the point of identity of the two philosophies, which we have examined in chapter IV using a minimally theologically coloured vocabulary. Here is Schelling himself using such vocabulary in the *Darstellung des Philosophischen Empirismus*:

Nun kann man aber diese den Dingen vorausgehende oder vorauszusetzende Einheit, von der sie selbst die bloßen Modificationen oder concreten Darstellungen sind, man kann diese Einheit entweder als eine bloß substantielle, also negative, oder als eine aktuelle, causale, also positive ansehen.⁶⁷⁴

The unity in which everything is grounded can be considered positively or negatively. This unity is however not a direct coincidence of two factors. A point in which two factors (here, existence and determination) stand in a relation of identity or construct a unity is for Schelling no point of sameness, as we should remind ourselves time and again, after the *Freiheitsschrift*. The *Darstellung des Philosophischen Empirismus* adds something to this image: a point of identity is always a point at which one of the two factors of identity or unified factors “outweighs” the other. It is so here as well: God imparts greater weight to the subjective principle. This “greater weight” does not point to the ontological primacy of the subjective, but rather the dominance of the *peras* over the *apeiron* – the fact that determination submits

has initiated the priority of the objective; cognition then turns to idealist philosophy, which grounds nature, as it is conceived through reason, in thought. This however does not mean that thinking has some sort of ontological priority for Schelling – as we have seen multiple times already, the priorities are priorities of grounding, where “ground” takes on different meanings – nature grounds thought ontologically, but thought grounds an understanding of nature in and through itself. Schelling is clear in the *Darstellung des Philosophischen Empirismus*: he is putting forth a transcendental realism. “Eine und dieselbe Ursache bringt an dem bloß erkennbaren Theil der Welt das Erkennbare, an dem erkennenden Theil das Erkennen hervor.” SW X, 237. English: “One and the same cause produces for the knowable part of the world the being-known and for the knowing part the knowing”. To see what Schelling means by “subjective” and “objective”, and to note that he indeed uses them in the exactly opposite way to the later *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*, see SW X, 241.

673 SW X, 256: “Ebenso Identität des Unendlichen und Endlichen, wenn man unter dem Unendlichen das ἄπειρον, unter dem Endlichen, wie Platon unter dem πέρας, das die Endlichkeit, die Grenze Setzende versteht; aber auch dieß nicht im Sinn jener substantiellen Identität des Unendlichen und Endlichen, die nur in dem gemeinschaftlichen Erzeugniß der beiden Principe gefunden wird, sondern im Sinne der Ursache.” English: “Likewise for the identity of the infinite and the finite, when we understand the infinite to be the ἄπειρον, and the finite to be what Plato means by πέρας, positing finitude or the limit. But also this is not in the sense of this substantial identity of the infinite and the finite which, which is found only in the common generation of both principles, but in the sense of cause.”

674 Ibid. English: “We can regard this unity, antecedent or prerequisite for things, of which those things are themselves mere modifications or concrete presentations, as either merely substantial and hence negative, or as actual and cause, hence positive.”

the undetermined to itself. The subjective and the objective principles are both posited simultaneously, since only with both principles can being emerge.⁶⁷⁵ that which is is also determined under the condition of the unfolding dynamic whole that is Schelling's God. Hence Schelling describes God as that which posits both the unlimited and the limitation – He is “die beide setzende – als die sowohl das Unbegrenzte des Seyns als die Begrenzung desselben setzende Ursache”.⁶⁷⁶ To confirm our conclusion – that God is the ground of determinability, without himself directly participating in instances of determination – we can observe this very same dynamic in the *Andere Deduktion der Prinzipien der Positiven Philosophie* of 1839, to which we now turn.

III Return of the Unprethinkable

The *Andere Deduktion* is significantly programmatically different from the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie*: it is a text that attempts to present the unfolding of God. As such, it begins with the unconditionally existing, with the *actus*, which precedes all potency: the unprethinkable being.⁶⁷⁷ The unprethinkable being is also the ground of this potency: Schelling claims that the first potency (Can) cannot be without a relation to the that, which merely has being (“Seynkönnen doch nicht ohne Beziehung auf das bloß Seyende seyn kann”),⁶⁷⁸ with the “bloß Seyende” in this quote being the whatness of the unprethinkable.⁶⁷⁹

675 Yet another reference to *Philebus*, likely to 54a-c – this particular dialogue plays a crucial role in the *Darstellung des Philosophischen Empirismus*.

676 SW X, 256. English: “the cause positing both the unlimited being and the limitation thereof.”

677 We have already discussed the unprethinkable extensively in chapters I and IV. It is however important at this stage to sum up all the aspects of the unprethinkable together and relate them to each other. It is particularly important to remember: the unprethinkable is more than mere matter, although both are in a certain sense pure indetermination. The difference lies in the fact that matter is only ever matter for something else, i.e. it only makes sense to call something matter when the process of potency unfolding has already begun, i.e., only within the ontoepistemological situation of Schellingian philosophy. The unprethinkable being (and not merely the principle of unprethinkability of being), on the other hand comes before all thought and develops itself through the three potencies – this is at least the view of the *Andere Deduktion*. It is also important to remember that the unprethinkable being is less than God, although God has Unprethinkable being within itself. But, ultimately, God has everything within him in a certain sense; the unprethinkable being is merely that which precedes all thought, while God is the initial and final unifier.

678 SW XIV, 339 – The unprethinkable being is, at any rate, also a condition for actualisation: “Dieses durch Uebergang a potentia ad actum mögliche Seyn hat nun zwar gar keinen Anspruch auf Wirklichkeit; es könnte von ihm als wirklichem gar nicht die Rede seyn, wenn nicht das unvordenkliche Seyn wäre [...]” (SW XIV, 347). English: “This being, possible through the transition a potentia ad actum has no claim to actuality at all; there could have be no speaking of it at as actual if it were not for unprethinkable being [...]”.

679 See SW XIV, 338: “Das nothwendig Existirende [this is also how Schelling refers to unprethinkable being in this text] ist nicht erst möglich und dann wirklich, sondern es ist gleich wirklich, es fängt mit dem Seyn an. Also jenes noch unerkannte Was, jenes x des unvordenklichen Seyns ist freilich antecedenter oder a priori nur das Seyende.” English: “The necessarily existing is not first possible and then actual, but it is immediately actual, it begins with being. Thus each as of yet unknown whatness, each x of unprethinkable being is certainly antecedenter or a priori only that which has Being.” This passage is complicated, and going through the complications is not necessary for the line of thought presented here, but a clarification is in order. In this text, Schelling is testing the question of whether unprethinkable being can be contingent. The necessary unprethinkable being has its Actus precede its potency, but it too has a Whatness – the question “what is it?”

In an untypical transition from the *actus* to potency, the unprethinkable being unfolds, raising itself to Can: “das bloß unvordenklich Seyende [erhebt sich] zu dem, was mehr als nur dieß, nämlich auch das Seynkönnende, Herr eines Seyns ist, das noch nicht ist.”⁶⁸⁰ In other words, the unprethinkable being unfolds with the help of God and, since it is God’s unprethinkable being, in Him. God, furthermore, in the *Andere Deduktion*, is eternal and necessary, but this eternal and necessary being is only God *a posteriori* and not necessarily, insofar as his divinity is in his positive attributes (wisdom, providence, goodness) and not sheerly in his necessary character.⁶⁸¹ The unfolding of unprethinkable being is of course no temporal sequence, but a logical one, since God is eternal and his eternity is a *conditio sine qua non* for his divinity.⁶⁸² At the beginning of this development, however, stands negation – the pure *in actu* existent receives a negation into itself: “[es] bekommt eine Negation, d. h. eine Potenz, in sich” and potentiates, ceasing to be mere pure act and becoming an act ready to further unfold.⁶⁸³ The unprethinkable, furthermore, just like eternity, is also a necessary aspect of God, without which God cannot be as God.⁶⁸⁴ Without this entire movement, beginning in the unprethinkable, the necessary being would remain in its static rigidity, without becoming in any way active, and hence also would not become God. Hence the “subjective” or determining side has, just as in the *Darstellung des Philosophischen Empirismus*, greater weight over and above the “objective” – God’s *actus purus* weights over the unprethinkable (mere *actus*) and “trumps” it:

Von Ewigkeit also sieht [Gott] sich als Herrn, sein unvordenkliches Seyn aufzuheben, allerdings nicht absolut es aufzuheben, aber es zu suspendiren, damit

can be asked about it. Its whatness is what Schelling calls above “a priori das Seyende”. This is what the first potency, the Can, is rooted in.

680 SW XIV, 343. English: “The merely unprethinkable being [lifts itself] to what is more than just this, namely is also the can-being, the Lord of Being which is as of yet not.”

681 SW XIV, 349-350: “[N]ur das Ewige kann Gott seyn, aber es ist nicht nothwendig Gott, es ist bloß a posteriori Gott, es ist kein nothwendiger Uebergang von den negativen zu den positiven Attributen Gottes, unter welche Vorsehung, Weisheit, Güte und alle die gehören, durch welche Gott erst eigentlich Gott ist, und die Theologie hat bis jetzt diesen Uebergang auch nicht gefunden.” English: “Only the eternal can be God, but it is not necessarily God; it is only a posteriori God. There is no necessary transition from the negative to the positive attributes of God, under which providence, wisdom, goodness and all the rest belong, through which God is first actually God, and theology has not found this transition yet either.”

682 SW XIV, 342.

683 SW XIV, 344 – It is exactly so also in the *Weltalter*; the beginning is a negation: “Der Anfangspunkt (terminus a quo) keiner Bewegung ist ein leerer, unthätiger Ausgangspunkt, sondern eine Verneinung derselben, die wirklich entstehende Bewegung eine Ueberwindung dieser Verneinung.” (SW VIII, 224, for English see *Ages of the World*, p. 16).

684 SW XIV, 350: “Ohne das vorausgesetzte unvordenkliche, d.h. (nach der früheren Erklärung) zufällig-nothwendige, insofern blinde Seyn – könnte Gott gar nicht Gott seyn [...]” English: “Without the presupposed unprethinkable being, i.e. (according to the earlier explanation) being that is accidentally-necessary, inasmuch as blind, God could have not been God [...]”

es ihm so mittelst eines nothwendigen Processes zum selbstgesetzten, zum freigewollten und so erst göttlich nothwendigen Seyn werde.⁶⁸⁵

Through this “Aufhebung” the blind contingent unprethinkable becomes conceptualisable being⁶⁸⁶ – or, to be more precise, the unprethinkable is cast off in order to give the creation space, “um der Schöpfung Raum zu geben”.⁶⁸⁷ Out of this “Aufhebung”, God sets forth the prototype of existence, which precedes all actual existence (“Gott [setzt sich] jenen Prototyp aller Existenz zusammen, aus dem allein alles wirkliche Existiren hervorgeht”)⁶⁸⁸ – i. e. he sets forth the threefold structure of the *Potenzenlehre*: the pure subject free of being, the infinite being as object and the subject-object. The pure Can, i.e. that “store” of undefined possibility which the unprethinkable grounds, is, however, never exhausted. This inexhaustible element is the source of contingency, which is there even in *Naturphilosophie* and the realm of natural process:

Gerade darum, weil die Potenz dem unvordenklichen Seyn nicht vorausging, konnte sie im Actus dieses unvordenklichen Existirens auch nicht überwunden seyn. Dadurch aber ist gerade in diesem unvordenklichen Existiren eine nicht auszuschließende Zufälligkeit gesetzt.⁶⁸⁹

This overcoming of the unprethinkable is a triumph of the understanding: everything is in principle understandable, but the process of understanding is also in principle never-ending. As we see, Schelling subscribes to this Kantian view:

Kant hat das Verdienst, zuerst mit klarem Bewußtseyn ausgesprochen zu haben, daß alles, was erkennbar seyn soll, und so weit es dieß ist, das Gepräge, die Bestimmungen des Verstandes an sich tragen muß.⁶⁹⁰

Due to the inexhaustibility and the contingency of existence, even that of humans, this universal intelligibility is not necessary, but factitious – God, the absolute freedom, is also free in His overcoming of His unprethinkable being, and this overcoming is hence also factitious. Through the overcoming of the unprethinkable, God divests Himself in blind unprethinkable existence and makes His own *actus purus*, His necessary existence, into essence,⁶⁹¹ i. e. into

685 Ibid. English: “From eternity [God] views himself as Master, in order to sublimate his unprethinkable being – not absolutely, but to suspend it, so that it become to him, by means of a necessary process, to an independent, freely willed and divinely necessary being.”

686 Ibid.

687 SW XIV, 351.

688 SW XIV, 356.

689 SW XIV, 338. English: “Precisely because potency is antecedent to unprethinkable being, it could not be overcome in the actus of this unprethinkable existence. Thereby, however, a non-exclusive contingency is posited in this unprethinkable existence.” Compare with SW XIV 340.

690 SW X 239. English: “Kant has had the merit to be the first to have said, with a clear awareness, that everything which should be knowable and as long as it is knowable should carry the determination of understanding in itself.”

691 SW XIV, 354: “Das, was diese Potenzen zusammenhält, ist eben der zum Wesen erhobene actus purus, der als übersubstantielle Einheit auch durch nichts Substantielles überwindlich ist.” English: “That which holds these potencies together is precisely the actus purus lifted to essence, which as over-substantial unity can also be overcome through nothing substantial.”

potency.⁶⁹² Thus that which has previously been unprethinkable is potentiated and directed towards development, towards the future, towards God as the prototype of all existence.⁶⁹³ If we here recall the first lectures of the *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, essence is the whatness of things, and it is intelligible and conceptual. The *Andere Deduktion* presents a God who develops Himself factically through the potencies towards intelligibility and is the source of all actuality in relation to these potencies. Despite that, God is – as the source of actuality and as the ground of intelligibility – transcendently necessary.

In this chapter I have presented three attempts to give a kind of “snapshot” of God – that of the *Weltalter*; that of the *Darstellung der Reirationalen Philosophie* and that of the *Andere Deduktion*. In the *Weltalter* we were confronted with the attempt to picture God as a static eternal whole. This attempt naturally fails, since it cannot satisfy one of the most crucial maxims of Schellingian philosophy, namely that philosophy must be an open system. The *Darstellung der Reirationalen Philosophie* and the *Andere Deduktion* present God in a completely different way, curiously closer to that of the *Freiheitsschrift*, with its double schema of God as, on one hand, the ground of all that exists (so, in a certain sense, as the beginning of All), the *Actus* antecedent to all, and on the other hand as the end of All and the actualisation of every potency. The “first” actualisation of things is the overcoming of the unprethinkable accident [Zufall] – of the *Urzufall*.⁶⁹⁴ The sheer facticity of this accident is why the world remains mysterious – the question: “why is there something at all, why not nothing?”,⁶⁹⁵ which Schelling at the beginning of his philosophical life in the *Philosophischen Briefen über Dogmatismus und Kritizismus* expressed as “Wie das Absolute aus sich herausgeht, und eine Welt sich entgegensetzen könnte?” is never solved for him. We could answer that because of the personal character of God, we should take God to be a free actor,⁶⁹⁶ and remark, with Temilo van Zantwijk’s *Pan-Personalismus*, that God, due to an original cision of His essence into ground and existence actually does ground the world through an *Urzufall* at a certain initial point.⁶⁹⁷ During this cision, God overcomes His unprethinkable and grounds the determination and intelligibility of things, as described in the Schellingian writings on positive philosophy. The problem I have posed at the beginning of this chapter, nevertheless, remains: Schelling appears to put forward contradictory views on God. On the

692 “Potenz ist Wesen” – SW XIV, 344.

693 SW XIV, 355.

694 *Metaphysik und Invention*, p. 270.

695 “Warum ist überhaupt etwas, warum ist nicht nichts?” – SW XIII, 242. English: “Why is there something at all, why is there not nothing?”

696 Schelling himself of course considers God and the act of creation to be free; see e.g. WA I, 137 (“Wirklicher Anfang kann nur von absoluter Freiheit kommen.”; English: “actual beginning can only come from absolute freedom”) or the discussion of the first activity in WA II, 46-47.

697 *Pan-Personalismus*, p. 225.

one hand, God seems to be the actual beginning and actual end, i.e. God is immanent to the world and the world-processes, and the infinitely-extending potency progression without beginning and end is, on this view, either simply mistaken, or a mere heuristic move, meant to spur our knowledge on. This option is however unlikely in light of Schelling's silence concerning some sort of basal fundamental level of existence. Were it for Schelling not the case that the chain of the *Potenzenlehre* went infinitely far in both direction and the processes of the world had infinitely many levels, but only the case that we did not know how far the chain went and how many levels there were in the world, then he could of course have attempted to explain what "atoms" and fundamental levels there were (or could be) – or at least claim, somewhere in his mature philosophy, *that* there were (or could be) such things. Instead Schelling describes the beginning of the world as the act of God (e. g. in the *Andere Deduktion* where the world is described as the suspended actus of the necessary divine existence),⁶⁹⁸ without describing at all what it is in the world that arises after this first act. This interpretation is also unlikely because the concept of immanent God is in complete contradiction with the idea of God in the *Weltalter* where God is in a certain sense "in eternity" with respect to the world, and is not posited in the world.⁶⁹⁹ The *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* with God located *outside* the system of four causes, undermines this interpretation further. On the other hand of the dilemma there is the second possible interpretation: the world is infinite and God transcends this world, which is the conclusion reached from the *Weltalter*. In this case, it would be impossible to make God into the beginning and end of the world. Yet, clearly, Schelling makes Him into that. Both options seem to fail.

The answer to this dilemma is usually taken to be eschatology. It seems that God, for Schelling, can be neither straightforwardly immanent nor transcendent, and that he rather remains in the future which always remains futural, something-to-be. The divine end will never be present and actualised; it is that to which everything tends. Such a thought is not foreign to Schelling's thinking. This solution is, however, at best partial. It demonstrates how God could stand at the end of All, without there being an actual end. The question as to the beginning of All could not, at a first glance, be answered in a similar way, for what is a past beginning, which was never present and actualised? It seems to be certain, that the beginning is past precisely because it once was actualised. The beginning of time or of the world is most definitely something graspable with difficulty, if at all. In the first edition of the *Weltalter* Schelling writes the following very interesting lines concerning this topic:

698 SW XIV 353: "Die Welt ist gar nichts anderes als der suspendirte actus des nothwendigen göttlichen Existirens". English: "The world is nothing at all but the suspended actus of the necessary divine existence".

699 See for instance SW VIII, 225.

[J]eder Anfang der Zeit [setzt] eine schon gewesene [voraus]: so muß der Anfang, der wirklich Anfang ist, den Ablauf derselben nicht erst zu erwarten haben, sondern sie muß gleich anfangs vergangen seyn. Ein Anfang der Zeit ist also undenkbar, wenn nicht gleich eine ganze Masse als Vergangenheit, eine andre als Zukunft gesetzt wird; denn nur in diesem polarischen Auseinanderhalten entsteht jeder Augenblick der Zeit.⁷⁰⁰

The beginning is hence something which has always been past, and yet it sets forth a future, so that, on the basis of this opposition between past and future, the unfolding of time emerges.⁷⁰¹

The past is here before the world and the future is after the world – both are outside of unfolding time.⁷⁰² Starting from the above, we could attempt to pose a possible question to this process of beginning: how, if at all, could we imagine a moment of beginning, so that this moment both is and is not? What would such a moment of beginning be like?

In order to not leave this dilemma without an answer, I will briefly outline a possible speculative solution, without extensively investigating it in what follows. The only solution which appears possible seems to be as follows: the point-zero of the universe is, according to Schelling, created by the actualised future God.⁷⁰³ In other words: it is in a certain sense only a logical past. God initiates the beginning of All from the future, but we cannot think this starting point in abstraction from the activity of God, because such a starting point does not unfold from itself. At the starting point there is actually no starting point; the starting point is caused from the future. This speculative hypothesis puts forward a future-to-come outside time,⁷⁰⁴ just like in speculative eschatology, but in this hypothesis there is also a past yet to come, which – despite its state of being to-come – is already past, and is past for all eternity. At no point does Schelling advance such a hypothesis explicitly and yet nothing in his writing speaks against it. In the *Weltalter* the beginning is defined negatively in relation to the end; it is a negation of and a desire for the end.⁷⁰⁵ The beginning can very well be a negation, because at the beginning there *is nothing*. This hypothesis of the futural beginning also gives us a

700 WA I, 136. English: “[E]ach beginning in time [presupposes] a time that has already been: thus the beginning which is truly a beginning must not expect the passing of this time, but this time must have been past from the beginning. A beginning of time is hence unthinkable, if not at the same time a whole quantum be posited as past and another as future, for only in this polar holding a part each moment of time arises.”

701 See the discussion of time in WA I, 141-145.

702 SW VIII, 4-5.

703 I am thankful to my husband, Bram Slagter, for helping me realise and formulate this.

704 See *Création et Eschatologie*, pp. 258: “Le Père était avant le temps, le Fils est dans le temps, l'Esprit sera après le temps. L'Esprit est le dernier Souverain de la création qui s'achève et retourne au Père. La gloire du Père et celle du Fils ne cessent pas, mais la gloire de l'Esprit s'ajoute à celle du Père et du Fils. Le « Jour de la gloire » est le Jour de la glorification commune du Père, du Fils et de l'Esprit.” English: “The Father was before time, the Son is in time, the Spirit will be after time. The spirit is the last Sovereign of creation who ends and returns to the Father. The glory of the Father and that of the Son do not cease, but the glory of the Spirit adds itself to that of the Father and the Son. The “Day of Glory” is the day of common glorification of the Father, the Son and the Spirit.” See also his discussion, of how Schelling uses Angelus Silesius and Joachim de Flore for his own eschatology.

705 SW VIII, 224 (*Ages of the World*, p. 16): “Denn überhaupt nur in der Verneinung liegt der Anfang. Aller Anfang ist seiner Natur nach nur ein Begehren des Endes oder dessen, was zum Ende führt, und verneint sich also als das Ende.”

possible interpretation of the claim that God has an eternal beginning⁷⁰⁶ – the beginning can be eternal precisely because it is *yet to come*. At the “beginning” there is no beginning, i.e. at the beginning the beginning is not recognisable as a beginning: “der Anfang darf sich selbst nicht kennen; welches so viel heißt: er darf sich selbst nicht kennen als Anfang.”⁷⁰⁷ At the beginning there is only what the eternal God makes into the beginning: “Der Ewige macht nicht das an sich Ueberwindliche oder Geringere von sich selbst, sondern was er freiwillig als solches ansieht, ansehen will, das, worin er die allerstärkste und innerlichste Kraft ist, zum Anfang.”⁷⁰⁸ This is how the circle and the line can stand in a relationship to one another: the beginning and the end arise due to the same supramundane divine activity,⁷⁰⁹ without the circle at that becoming fully closed, i.e. without the beginning and end being fully congruent. A geometrical representation of such a time axis is impossible, but it is a series where the beginning and the end are the same. Such an outlook onto the whole could seem more plausible than the reading of the *Weltalter* presented in the first part of this chapter. It is however not clear that this account of the whole could avoid Markus Gabriel’s critique of totality and that it would do a sufficient job of explaining the transition from eternity to time. It is even less clear which speculative standpoint would enable Schelling to have such a view of God as a whole. This question of beginning and end hence remains highly problematic. I will not elaborate on this question further here, since only parts of the *Weltalter* provide textual evidence for the above hypothesis – nevertheless, Schelling writes that God clouds the past beginning in the dark night (“[hüllt] den vergangenen Anfang [...] in dunkele Nacht”)⁷¹⁰ and that the search for the beginning is eternal, but self-originating (“ein ewiges, aus sich selbst entspringendes Suchen”).⁷¹¹

Setting this first dilemma aside, we come to another dichotomy: on one side God is the condition of actual existence, and on the other – the condition of cognition of actuality. In other words, God is either an ontological or an epistemological condition – or both. Here, the multi-layered character of Schelling’s philosophy plays an important role – as we have seen, a multitude of moves and elements in Schelling’s philosophy can be read both ontologically and epistemologically. Thus, without deciding the question of how God’s conditioning ought to be read, we could say that God encompasses all that exists, in a certain sense, and is even the source of all actuality for all that exists. We have seen this already in the first chapter of this

706 SW VIII, 225 (for English, see *Ages of the World*, p. 17).

707 SW VIII, 314 (for English, see *Ages of the World*, p. 85)

708 SW VIII, 311 (for English, see *Ages of the World*, p. 83). “The eternal does not make into the beginning what is in itself superable and humble in the eternal. Rather, the eternal makes into the beginning what it voluntarily beholds, what it wants to behold.”

709 See WA II, 47.

710 SW VIII, 207.

711 WA I, 139.

work: in the first nine lectures of the *Philosophie der Offenbarung* Schelling ontologises the Kantian transcendental ideal, which then plays a fundamental role in the Schellingian ontology. For this work, and for an onto-epistemological philosophy (i.e. for a transcendental realism) it is far more important that God is the architectonic condition of intelligibility. At the beginning of this chapter we have posed the question of determination: through the chain of potencies of the natural processes, a certain part of the determination of this process comes out as negative, i.e. determined by the potency B. Another part would be positive determination, carried out by potency +A, as I have pointed out in chapter II. We have here attempted to find out whether Schelling can explain the role of God in this process of positive determination, in that he presents God as the sum of all reality and the natural process as unfolding according to the *Weltgesetz*. All potencies are to be actualised, and none is to be suppressed. Hence we have hypothesised that, since God is not involved in the local processes of unfolding, we could perhaps take the world as a preliminary whole and thus attempt to discover whether Schelling's God directs the world as a whole. In Schelling's philosophy, God indeed figures as the sum of all reality and the potencies do indeed develop themselves according to the *Weltgesetz*, and yet there is no evidence, in Schelling's texts, that God plays a direct role in the determination of the processes in the world. So, while the potencies unfold and even as divine revelation plays out in history, God does not play a role in their unfolding except for setting the stage for them and shaping their determination *as a whole*, as a scheme: He is not a factor in becoming, just like unprethinkable being does not play a role within the chain of potencies. Instead, God is a necessary condition of their cognition, which because of the special onto-epistemological character of Schelling's thought, is also ontologically significant. In the light of this partly negative answer, we can nevertheless affirm that positive determination does not stem from God, but is rather, just like its negative counterpart, immanent. We have furthermore attained a second, more important conclusion: in the search for the role played by God in the system of the *Potenzenlehre*, we have discovered, that God is the necessary condition of the system and its intelligibility. Something in Schelling's "bird-eye" view on God is correct – God does indeed stand outside of the system, ontologically as person and postulated ground of all actuality, and methodologically as a transcendental condition. Due to the impossibility of thinking the unprethinkable metaphysically, both aspects appear to be ultimately methodological. For the purposes of the *Potenzenlehre* and our project, we no longer have a metaphysical puzzle as to the role of God in the *Potenzenlehre*. The Schellingian system turns out to be open, and each attempt to somehow "close" the system, i.e. to demonstrate how exactly God as a certain determined whole influences the potency process is

doomed to fail just like the *Weltalter*. Instead, Schelling leaves it to the positive philosophy to trace the unfolding of what he calls the ongoing, progressive proof for the existence of God.⁷¹² We will not go into further detail about this proof and instead go back to our investigation of the *Potenzenlehre*. Our next chapter will serve as a further step in the investigation of determination in the *Potenzenlehre*, and partly as an example to the application of its general idea – it will trace the construction of space and time in Schelling’s philosophy. Schelling has used potencies for the construction of space since the 1800 *Allgemeine Deduktion des Dynamischen Prozesses*, and he remained to have a very high opinion of that text in the 1840s, explicitly approving it in the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*. From this approval of space-construction and extrapolating from some passages in various late Schelling works, we will also discuss his potency-based treatment of time.

712 SW XIII, 132.

VI

The Construction of Space and Time

The previous chapter has pointed us to the conclusion that God plays no direct role in becoming of things, and that the determination of these things is to a predominant extent immanent. In order to attempt to better understand this determination, and consequently the activity of the potencies, this chapter will turn to the structure and function of the two fundamental parameters which are used to measure the extent of transformation and becoming: space and time. In light of the Schellingian emphasis on the constant activity of everything that exists, it is probably not unexpected to hear that Schelling conceives of space and time neither as external continua and absolute “containers” or objects, nor as purely subjective relative constructions; he is rather concerned with the construction of space and time. In the following, I will follow this construction of space and time in order to work out how the spatial and temporal conditions influence the operations of the *Potenzenlehre* and vice versa. I will in the following distinguish between two kinds of construction – that of space and that of time, for these two kinds are different with respect to their mechanisms, although they emerge and unfold together.⁷¹³ We will see that the Schellingian conclusions concerning the construction of time are particularly interesting, since they uncover a surprising relation between the three so-called “Ages” – past, present and future, namely that the present determinations of things arise out of the reciprocal activity of the past and the future, and that Schelling, precisely because of this reciprocal activity, puts forth a certain kind of retroactive causality in his philosophy. The mechanism, the significance and the implications of such a causality will then also be discussed in this chapter.

I Space

In Schelling’s earlier texts, space is a sheer kind of void, which is then filled through some kind of activity. For instance, we read in the *System des Transzendentalen Idealismus*: “Denn selbst alle Raumerfüllung ist nur ein Grad von Thätigkeit, und jedes Ding nur ein bestimmter Grad von Thätigkeit, mit welchem der Raum erfüllt wird.”⁷¹⁴ In the earlier naturphilosophical writings (I take the *Erster Entwurf* as an example here) Schelling further determines this

713 Werner Gent notes that Schelling comes to the same conclusion as Minkowski, namely that time and space are only actual in mutual differentiation (“wirklich in gegenseitigen Differenzierung”), so that they emerge as actual only in their union - Gent, W.: “Die Kategorien des Raumes und der Zeit bei F. W. J. Schelling” in *Zeitschrift für Philosophische Forschung* 8/3 (1954) pp.353-377, p. 369, [cited as *Kategorien des Raumes und der Zeit*].

714 SW III, 375 – for English, see *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 32: “For even all occupancy of space is merely a degree of activity, and every thing merely a specific degree of activity with which the space is filled.”

activity as the work of opposing tendencies (“das Werk entgegengesetzter Tendenzen”),⁷¹⁵ which in 1799 are conceived to be still rather close to the Kantian repulsive and attractive forces,⁷¹⁶ although Schelling stresses that he does not consider gravity to be an instance of the attractive force, but as a *cohesive force*, i.e. a force which pulls matter together and contributes substantially to the construction and persistence of matter.⁷¹⁷ The most well-known and well-read of Schelling’s works, while discussing the filling of space, do not answer the question of its nature and its construction. The answers lie in a somewhat less known text, the *Allgemeine Deduktion des Dynamischen Prozesses oder der Kategorien der Physik* of 1800. Schelling’s assessment of the view of space presented in this text remains very positive also in later times, and he refers to it in many later philosophical works, for instance in the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*⁷¹⁸ and the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie*.⁷¹⁹ Hence, I take it to be that a coherent picture of the Schellingian concept of space and its construction can be gleaned from those three texts,

The *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* informs us that space considered in itself (through, of course, an extreme move of abstraction⁷²⁰) is fully inert:

Der Raum für sich selbst ist etwas so Passives, Todtes, absolut Subjektloses, Unreelles, und zugleich etwas so Apriorisches, so wenig, wie Kant gezeigt hat, von den Dingen erst Abstrahirbares, daß er nicht etwas für sich Subsistirendes seyn kann, daß er in einem Subjekt seyn muß.⁷²¹

At the end of this quote, Schelling remarks that space “must be in a subject” – “in einem Subjekt sein muss”. This, however, does not mean that space is localised in the human subject, and hence is subjective in a Leibnizian or a Kantian sense, since Schelling writes in the very same text:

Auf keinen Fall nun könnten wir diese Kantische Auflösung [die Auflösung der Antinomien von Raum und Zeit – D.K.] annehmen, weil wir uns zu seinem transcendentalen Idealismus nicht bekennen, d.h. zu der Meinung, daß die Außenwelt als solche – ein völlig unbestimmbares, absolut unerkennbares,

715 SW III, 17. For English, see *First Outline*, p. 16-17.

716 See SW III, 264. For English, see *First Outline*, p. 189.

717 See SW III, 29-30. For English, see *First Outline*, p. 25-26.

718 SW X, 358.

719 SW XI, 435.

720 In the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* Schelling describes the “intelligible” (“intelligibler”) and the sensible “sinnlicher” space (see lecture 18), followed by the mathematical space (lecture 19). All these kinds of space are, to an extent, abstractions.

721 SW X, 318. English: “Space for itself is something so passive, dead, absolutely subjectless, unreal, and simultaneously something so a priori, so hardly abstractable from things, as Kant put it, that it cannot be anything subsisting in itself and must be in a subject.”

transscendentes Objekt, oder wie es sonst genannt wird, Ding an sich beiseit gesetzt - außer unsern Vorstellungen gar nicht existire.⁷²²

Here, Schelling explicitly rejects the Kantian views on space. Furthermore, in the *Weltalter* he writes that things are not located in space, but space only is through things: “die Dinge [sind] nicht im Raum, sondern der Raum [ist] in den Dingen [als] ihre maßgebende Kraft”. Space is in no way dependent on, or located in, the subject; Schelling here is more of a realist than Kant. Schellingian space is not subjective in the usual sense of the word, and the subject in which space is to be is consequently nature (since the active becoming nature is a subject for Schelling⁷²³) and, to recall chapter II, the matter unfolding itself in nature (which in the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* was made into a subject as the first potency⁷²⁴). Hence Schelling names space the pure form of existence outside the concept: “die reine Form der Existenz [...], des Daseyns außer dem Begriff”,⁷²⁵ and connects it to matter, namely with the second counterpart of the dual material potency (B). In every iteration of the potency, as it was described in the chapter II of this work, the material potency B withdraws, and through negative determination, gives space to the products of the potency chain (“gibt [den Produkten der Potenzenkette] Statt, d.h. Raum”)⁷²⁶. Due to the constant activity of the potencies, space is then posited and configured anew at every moment:

Denn jener Aufschluß, durch den es überhaupt zu einer gesonderten Vielheit von Existenzen, zu einem Daseyn im Raume kommt, ist nicht als ein etwa im Anfang

722 SW X, 338. English: “In no case could we accept this Kantian solution [the solution of the antinomies of space and time – D.K.], because we do not subscribe to his transcendental idealism, i.e. to the opinion that the external world as such – a fully indeterminable, absolutely unknowable transcendent object, or, as it is otherwise named, thing-in-itself – does not at all exist outside our representations.”

723 SW III, 12. For English, see *First Outline*, p. 13.

724 SW X, 310-311.

725 SW X, 314.

726 SW X 322-323 – the entire quote is as follows: “Denn jenes B, wie wir es nannten, das in seiner Ausschließlichkeit nicht mehr bestehen kann, ist darum nicht vernichtet, und wenn es, die höhere Macht aufgebend, an seiner Statt die verschiedenen voneinander unabhängigen Existenzen setzt, die es in sich nicht enthalten konnte, muß es doch in jedem Moment dazu (zu diesem ihnen Raum Geben) gebracht werden - das absolute Subjekt gibt ihnen Statt, d.h. Raum, dieser Raum ist die apriorische Bedingung ihrer Existenz, es muß aber zu diesem Raum Geben in jedem Moment gebracht werden, denn der Wille, die Kraft, sie wieder zurückzunehmen, zeigt sich als vorhanden in der allgemeinen Attraktion, die freilich nur als Solicitation, gleichsam als Zuckung, sich kund gibt, in der das absolute Subjekt, um einen süddeutschen Ausdruck zu gebrauchen, nur sich ahndet, aus der Vergangenheit herauswirkt, seine Gegenwart als Vergangenheit noch immer kund gibt; dadurch allein geschieht es, daß jedes Element, jedes der Gewordenen nur als ein immer wieder werdendes zugleich mit dem Raum in die Zeit gesetzt ist, doch weniger ihr unterworfen als sie gewältigend.” English: “For this B, as we have called it, can no longer consist in its exclusivity, is thereby not annihilated, and if it, giving up the higher power, posits in its place the different mutually independent existents which it could not contain in itself, it must be brought in every moment to give to those existents their space. The absolute subject gives them stead, i.e. place; this place is the a priori condition of their existence. It must, however, be brought to this space-giving in every moment, for the will, the power to take itself back manifests as present in the general attraction, which makes itself known certainly only as solicitation, a convulsion, as it were, in which the absolute subject, to use a southern German expression, only anticipates itself, acts only out of the past, always manifesting its present as the past. only thus does it happen that each element, each becoming is only posited in time, along with space, as an always ongoing becoming, less as subordinate to it than as overpowering it.”

der Zeiten einmal für allemal geschehener und dann nicht wieder geschehender – er ist selbst als ein ewiger, d.h. immerwährender, und so dann auch der Raum nicht als ein für allemal Seyendes, sondern als ein in jedem Moment wieder, durch eine sich wiederholende Negation des Einen absoluten Subjekts Gesetztes zu denken, durch welche Negationen des ausschließlichen Subjekts, aus welchen jetzt der alles einschließende Raum wird, gleichsam als leere Stelle desselben, diese absolute Subjektlosigkeit zurückbleibt. Durch wiederholte Negation muß dieß geschehen.⁷²⁷

Here we receive a confirmation, that space is “objective”, i.e. not dependent on a human subject: it is posited through the activity of the potencies. Marie-Luise Heuser reads the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* on this point to say that the space-positing subject is none other than the subjective principle of nature, which transforms itself into the objective.⁷²⁸ This position allows Schelling to give a critical answer to the third antinomy of the first *Critique* – that the world is simultaneously limited and unlimited spatially and temporally: the world is neither unlimited, nor does it have a specific limit somewhere in itself, but it is rather the activity of the potencies that constructs space in such a way, that there is a limit everywhere in the world. The Schellingian solution of the antinomy would be as follows: the world should be a priori neither unlimited nor limited, because the material space of the world is itself a part of an even larger space. The world is thus relatively limited.⁷²⁹ In this relatively limited world, everywhere within the relative limit, there are reciprocal limitations of materially extended things, and Schelling oddly calls these limitations absolute:

[W]enn wir uns die Materie allerdings begrenzt denken, wird sie dadurch nicht endlich – in sich selbst nämlich ist sie auch jetzt unbegrenzt, denn ihre eigne Unendlichkeit ist nicht aufgehoben, weil das, wodurch sie begrenzt ist, in einer höhern und ganz verschiedenen Ordnung liegt. Die Vernunft fordert nicht, daß das materielle Universum absolut endlich, sie fordert nur, daß es gegen eine höhere Ordnung endlich sey [...] Die Grenze des materiellen Universum ist nicht jenseits

727 SW X, 322. English: “For every exploration, through which we arrive at a separate multiplicity of existents, to an existence in space, is not like something that, in the beginning of time, happened once and for all and then never happened again – it is itself as something eternal, i.e. more and more permanent, and thus also space is not to be thought as has-being once and for all, but as posited in every moment again, through a repeated negation of the One absolute subject, through these negations of the exclusive subject, out of which the all-encompassing space becomes, somewhat as empty place of that subject, and this absolute subjectlessness remains. It must happen through repeated negation.”

728 See Heuser, M. L.: “Space Philosophy: Schelling and the Mathematicians of the Nineteens Century”. In *Angelaki* 24/1 (2016) pp. 43-58, here pp. 55, footnote 13.

729 SW X, 339-340: “Der Raum, den wir insgemein so nennen, der, in welchem sich die Körper befinden und die Sterne bewegen, ist nur ein Theil, eine Region des wahren Raums. Wir können ihn den relativen oder auch den sinnlichen Raum nennen, über den der absolute oder intelligible hinausgeht, ohne ihn darum zu hindern, in sich unendlich zu seyn. Es gibt nicht nur Ein Unendliches, es gibt Unendliche verschiedener Ordnung, wo das Unendliche der niedereren gegen das der höheren wieder ein Endliches wird, wie in der Mathematik das Unendliche der ersten Ordnung sich gegen das der zweiten wieder als eine endliche Größe verhält.” English: “That space, as we generally call it, in which bodies exist and stars move, is only a part, a region of true space, We could call it relative space or also sensible space, over which absolute or intelligible space extends, without preventing it from being infinite in itself. There is not only one infinity, there are infinities of various orders, where the infinite of the lower order is in turn a finite relative to a higher order, as in mathematics a first order infinity acts in turn as a finite magnitude in relation to a second order infinity.”

des Sirius oder eines der undurchdringlichen und unauflöslichen Nebelflecken, sie ist überall, sie ist nicht eine relative, an einen gewissen Punkt des unendlichen Raumes gesetzte, sie ist eine absolute Grenze.⁷³⁰

That which sets boundaries in space, which determines the spatial configurations itself is, in this passage as well as in other Schelling's writings, matter. Here we can see how this feature of matter is related to the role of potency B as "giving space", as well as to the logic of space-construction which Schelling has developed earlier in the *Allgemeine Deduktion* and has held for sound forty years later: the logic according to which matter, inasmuch as it fills that "space" which is empty abstraction, gives to this space its own dimensions and determinations. This construction of dimensions takes place according to the *Allgemeine Deduktion* through the expansive and the retarding force – the concepts are here still highly Kantian, and parallel to those used by Schelling in the *Erster Entwurf*. Since those two opposing forces are both forces of nature, i.e. of one and the same subject, they are not absolutely opposed to each other, but only relatively.⁷³¹ One of the powers, the expansive, is active at a point A in a definite direction, and is thereby limited through the retarding force. The two forces are active along a line, and stand balanced on this line at a point C. The Schellingian diagram looks to be as follows, where B is the point of activity of the retarding force, which, according to Schelling, is applied *on A* through action at a distance ("[sie wirkt] in die Ferne"⁷³²):

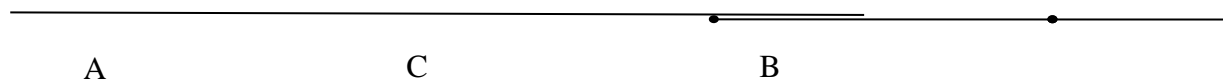


Fig. 2. Diagram of space construction from the *Allgemeine Deduktion*

The *Allgemeine Deduktion* postulates, therefore, a multitude of forces, which Schelling then considers as separate from each other in the second moment of his deduction. He posits the attractive force as directionless – it works without a particular direction, and along endlessly many lines. In this case, there not just one line, but infinitely many on a plane.⁷³³ This, according to Schelling, is the origin of geometry. It should here be noted, that the *Allgemeine Deduktion* does not postulate the existence of three forces, each of which corresponds to a

730 SW X, 339. English: "[I]f we think matter as undoubtedly limited, it does not through that thought become finite – it itself rather it is also now unlimited, for its own infiniteness is not sublated, because that through which it is limited lies in a higher and completely different order. Reason does not demand that the material universe be absolutely finite, merely that it is finite against a higher order [...] The limit of the material universe is not beyond the Sirius or the impenetrable and indissoluble flecks of nebulae, it is everywhere, if is not a relative limit set at a certain point of the infinite space, but an absolute limit."

731 SW IV, 5.

732 SW IV, 8.

733 SW IV, 9

dimension, but rather that the expansive force, if applied at multiple points and is unlimited, would construct the infinite space, while the retarding force, if it were to encounter no resistance, would collapse into a single point. When these forces are posited as opposed to each other, lines are formed through the action of both forces, from which then in turn dimensions are constructed.⁷³⁴ Ultimately, matter and all the dimensions of space arise from the lines of action of the two above forces. This happens when the two forces coincide as to their point of application, and yet are simultaneously separate.⁷³⁵ There is a force specific to the already formed three dimensions, a third active force, namely gravity, which for Schelling is not merely an attractive force, but unites the two other forces.⁷³⁶ Gravity determines the exact balance and interaction of the expansive and retarding forces and hence, according to Schelling, different bodies have different densities.⁷³⁷

This presentation of the filling of space, which is also the formation of space, is nevertheless quite odd. First, Schelling links these the three dimensions of space (length, width, breadth) with magnetism,⁷³⁸ electricity and chemical processes respectively, and it is never fully clear how it could be, that we require only one dimension for magnetic effects and only two – for electric processes. Do we not need matter in each of the above cases, i.e. all three dimensions? Is it not a bad kind of abstraction, to construct space dimension for dimension? It must hence be investigated, whether in later texts something has changed as to the Schellingian idea of space-construction, and whether Schelling's theory was modified with the introduction of the *Potenzenlehre*. We can see from the above that the dimensions in the *Allgemeine Deduktion* are presented still without mention of the concept of the potency. Schelling, however, does agree with the presentation of the *Allgemeine Deduktion* at least to some extent also in the later texts, adding in the *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*:

Bekanntlich beruht die Körperlichkeit auf dem Daseyn der drei Dimensionen. Diese drei Dimensionen sind in der That nichts anderes als die drei Potenzen am Einzelnen: 1) egoistische Dimension, wodurch ein Ding sich selbst als sich selbst setzt = Länge, Linie oder, was dasselbe ist, Cohärenz. Kraft der Cohärenz würde ein jedes Ding sich ins Unendliche fortsetzen, wenn es nicht durch eine andere Dimension begrenzt würde. Daher 2) ideale Dimension (einschränkende der egoistischen) = Breite. 3) Indifferenz = dritter Dimension.⁷³⁹

734 Compare *Andere Deduktion* §11 und 18 - SW IV 9, 13-14

735 SW IV 31

736 SW IV, 38

737 SW IV, 42.

738 For a discussion of how space relates to magnetism, see *Unendlichkeit und System*, pp. 112-115.

739 SW VII, 477. English: "It is well-known that physicality rests on the existence of three dimensions. These three dimensions are in fact nothing else than the three potencies separately: 1) the egoistic dimension, through which a thing posits itself as itself = length, line, or, what is the same, cohesion. The power of cohesion would posit everything to continue to infinity, if it were not limited through another dimension. Hence 2) ideal dimension (limiting the egoistic) = breadth. 3) Indifference = third dimension."

Here Schelling is repeating the scheme of space-construction: the first potency is the unlimited *apeiron* and constructs the line. The most likely logical explanation for why the unlimited constructs a line (and not, for instance, a plane) is that when the unlimited is fully unlimited, its activity cannot be scattered, but must be directed along only one direction.⁷⁴⁰ The second dimension delimits the line and redirects the activity of the first potency. The third potency then sets the two previous dimensions and the different ways in which the second potency limits the first together according to the principle of identity, which we have already discussed, and thus arises a definite delimited area of space – a spatial material object.

The *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* adds naturphilosophical considerations to this abstract derivation of space. The dimensions, writes Schelling in lecture 19, arise in the real sense within the realm of organic nature, because it is in the organic nature that there are different possibilities for motion.⁷⁴¹ In other words: space is constructed through the generation of matter and the movement of actively moving parts of nature. It is difficult to extrapolate more on the nature of space from the *Potenzenlehre*, but we have arrived at an important principle: space is constructed through the movement and generation of things, that is, it is derived from the activity of the potencies.

II Time

In the young Schelling, the concept of time is, just like the concept of space, heavily influenced by Kant.⁷⁴² So, a consciousness can posit an object only in time, and time is the transcendental condition of all synthesis.⁷⁴³ However, he argues in the *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* against a mechanistic picture of nature, and especially against the concept of time-atoms.⁷⁴⁴ Schelling then goes on to develop various accounts of time in various texts. So, for instance, time is the eternal copula (“die ewige Kopula”)⁷⁴⁵ in the *Ideen*, the result of the reciprocal action of the two powers (still the expansive and the retarding) in

740 This hypothesis is speculative – Schelling does not explain the matter in this way. He, however, also does not explain it in any other way.

741 See SW XI, 435: “Um so mehr mußte dieß geschehen, wenn man bemerkt hatte, wie die reelle, principielle Bedeutung der Dimensionen erst in der organischen Natur ganz offen liegt. Der unorganische Körper hat an sich weder rechts und links, noch oben oder unten, noch vorn und hinten, sondern wir bestimmen diese Unterschiede bloß nach seinen Beziehungen zu uns.” English: “This was to happen all the more, if one noticed how the real, principal meaning of dimensions first lies completely clear in nature. The inorganic body has, in itself, neither right nor left, neither up nor down, neither front or back, but we determine these differences purely according to their relations to us”.

742 For a discussion of time in early Schelling, see *Kategorien des Raumes und der Zeit*, pp. 353-356.

743 SW I, 228: “Da Zeit Bedingung aller Synthesis ist, und eben deßwegen von der transcendentalen Einbildungskraft durch und in der Synthesis hervorgebracht wird, so kann man das Ganze auch so darstellen. Das Schema des reinen (außerhalb aller Zeit gesetzten) Seyns ist Daseyn in Zeit überhaupt (d.i. in der Handlung der Synthesis überhaupt).” For English, see Schelling, F. W. J. *The Unconditioned in Human Knowledge: Four Early Essays*. Tr. Fritz Marti. Lewisburg: 1980. P. 117.

744 See SW II, 209-210.

745 SW II, 365.

the *Erster Entwurf*,⁷⁴⁶ a subjective structure in the *System des Transzendentalen Idealismus*,⁷⁴⁷ etc. A particularly interesting account is given in the *System der gesamten Philosophie und der Naturphilosophie insbesondere*, a text from Schelling's *Identitätsphilosophie*, where time is presented as the annihilation of particular life as a particular ("Vernichtung des besonderen Lebens als ein besonderen"),⁷⁴⁸ but also as installing identity into difference ("Einbildung der Identität in die Differenz").⁷⁴⁹ This presentation of time as annihilation and as installing identity means that time is seen as the condition of relation of the particular with the whole. In the *Identitätsphilosophie* period, time is still phenomenal for Schelling, since philosophy is still to concern itself only with the eternal.⁷⁵⁰ The conception of time developed in that period is very formalistic, and hence Schelling seeks to develop his understanding of time further.⁷⁵¹ In the late Schelling, time seems to be still a very problematic topic: Schelling, in his works, is extensively concerned with the becoming of things, so with a process, which at least *prima facie* is highly connected to the questions of time. However, only very rarely does Schelling discuss the definite temporal structures of becoming – even the *Weltalter*, although according to its name a text on "ages", does not pose the question of the structure of becoming, but rather raises, among other things, the problem of the general nature of time and its beginning.⁷⁵²

The Schellingian texts which I have discussed in this work, however, let us draw some inferences towards a reconstruction of late Schelling's views on time – even if such a reconstruction sometimes has to take speculative steps. We could begin such a reconstruction with remembering that the potencies are active in natural phenomena, in predication as transcendental functions and even in artistic, cognitive and generally "spiritual" activities.⁷⁵³

746 SW III, 262.

747 SW IV, 442.

748 SW VI, 220.

749 SW VI, 223.

750 Compare SW IV, 115: "Es ist die Natur der Philosophie alles Nacheinander und Außereinander, allen Unterschied der Zeit und überhaupt jeden, welchen die bloße Einbildungskraft in das Denken einmischt, völlig aufzuheben [...]" For English, see *Presentation of My System*, pp. 349-350. The questions of time and becoming in the *Identitätsphilosophie* will also be discussed in chapter VII of this work.

751 For an account of time in the *Identitätsphilosophie*, especially in *Bruno*, see *Individualität und Selbstheit*, pp. 63-64.

752 Time is, according to the *Weltalter*, the result of the differentiation of equipollently postied forces, i.e. dynamic (WA I, 140). The beginning of time according to Schelling was briefly examined in the previous chapter. For a discussion of time in the *Weltalter*, also touching on human temporality, the future in relation to death and an interesting discussion of how temporality can be both a sequence in the direction of the future and a separation of past and present, see Wieland, W. W.: *Schellings Lehre von der Zeit*, Freiburg/Breisgau: 1956, [zit. *Schellings Lehre von der Zeit*]. For a text arguing that the *Weltalter* is not a work of "philosophy of history", see *Geschichte – Kunst – Mythos*, pp. 164.

753 Schelling writes, for instance in the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* (SW X, 375): "[U]nstreitig auch in den dichterischen und künstlerischen, ja in jeder geistigen Hervorbringung das eigentlich Producirende immer ein blindes, nur durch eine höhere Potenz zugleich seiner mächtig gewordenes Princip ist." English: "[u]ndoubtedly also in poetic and artistic, indeed, in every spiritual endeavour, the truly productive is always a blind principle, only becoming powerful through a higher potency." And later on pages 377-378: "Denn auch in

Furthermore, Schelling attempts to express those artistic, cognitive, or generally “spiritual” activities in terms of the same creative potency dialectic. He writes in the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*:

[U]nstreitig auch in den dichterischen und künstlerischen, ja in jeder geistigen Hervorbringung das eigentlich Producirende immer ein blindes, nur durch eine höhere Potenz zugleich seiner mächtig gewordenes Princip ist.⁷⁵⁴

We have already seen that in addition to a dynamic, fundamentally processual ontology of becoming, Schelling develops a processual and functional epistemology and theory of determination. Within this far-reaching framework of potentiation, Schelling comes up with a very interesting view of time, presented most clearly in the *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*:

Eigentlich hat jedes Ding (nicht nur das Universum) die Zeit in sich selbst. Es gibt keine äußere, allgemeine Zeit; alle Zeit ist subjektiv, d.h. eine innere, die jedes Ding in sich selbst hat, nicht außer sich. Weil aber jedes einzelne Ding andere Dinge vor und außer sich hat, so kann alsdann seine Zeit mit der Zeit anderer Dinge verglichen werden, da es doch nur eine eigne subjektive Zeit hat. Dadurch entsteht dann das Abstractum Zeit – nämlich erst durch Vergleichung, Messung. An sich aber gibt es keine Zeit. Das Reale in der Zeit sind bloß die verschiedenen Einschränkungen, durch welche ein Wesen geht. Wir können daher philosophisch eigentlich nur sagen: ein Ding ist durch diese und diese Einschränkungen gegangen, aber nicht es hat so und so lang gelebt.⁷⁵⁵

Time is used for measurement and arises through measurement – but this applies only to time as an “Abstractum”. Time in this sense is just like space: more than a mere thought-construct, less than an absolute external structure which exists independently of things. Furthermore, as

der unorganischen Natur ist das blinde Princip schon genöthigt Bestimmungen des Verstandes anzunehmen, aber dieses Princip zeigt sich hier als ein das Verständige nicht selbst wollend, sondern nur nicht-wollend Hervorbringendes, als ein werkzeuglicher Verstand. Der Urstand, das was zuerst hervortreten muß, um Anfang alles Werdens, der Punkt zu seyn, an den sich der Proceß des Werdens anknüpft, der Urstand, in sich selbst, in seine Potenz zurückgebracht, wird zum *Verstand*, aber der Verstand, der sich in den unorganischen Bildungen zeigt, ist nicht zum sich selbst festhaltenden Princip geworden, er ist ein der Materie nach fremder, wie auch daraus erhellt, daß der Krystall z.B. gegen die Zerstörung seiner Form sich völlig gleichgültig verhält, während das Organische sich in seiner Form zu erhalten strebt.” English: “For also in inorganic nature it is already necessary for the blind principle to accept the determinations of reason, but this principle manifests itself here as not itself willing the rational, but only as a non-willing production, as an instrumental reason. The primordial state, that which is first to emerge in order to be the beginning of all becoming – to be the point to which the process of becoming is tied in – the primordial state in itself, brought back into its potency, becomes *understanding*, but understanding which manifests itself in the inorganic formations has not become a self-obeying principle; it is alien according to matter, from which it is also clear that the crystal, for example, is entirely indifferent as to the destruction of its form, while the organic strives to maintain itself in its form.”

754 SW X, 375. English: “Without a doubt also in the poetic and the artistic, and in every spiritual production, the properly producing is always a blind principle, always made powerful only through a higher potency.”

755 SW VII, 431. English: “In fact, every thing (not only the universe) has time in itself. There is no outer, general time; all time is subjective, i.e. an inner time which each thing has in itself, not outside of itself. Because however each specific things has other things before and outside of itself, so thereupon its time can be compared with the time of other things, for it has only its own subjective time. Through this, the abstractum “time” arises – i.e. through comparison, measurement. In itself, however, there is no time. The real in time is merely the different limitations through which an essence runs. We can hence only say philosophically: a thing has gone through these and these limitations, not that it has live so and so long.”

Markus Gabriel points out in his article *Die Zeitphilosophie in Schellings „Weltaltern“* it is imprecise to say that time is always a time of things; it is far more a time of processes.⁷⁵⁶ Processes have “time” even if their becoming is not measured; the odd but crucial point is that each process has its own time, its own rhythm, in itself – and is the fruit of its own time.⁷⁵⁷ Thus time is universally subjectivised without becoming subjective in the sense of human subjectivity.⁷⁵⁸ An explanation of this point would have been interesting and useful here, but Schelling does not elaborate any further in the *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*; he merely adds that the withdrawal of God dissolves the cycle of potencies and gives time its beginning. This is in agreement with Schelling’s claim that God is the beginning of all, although it does not help us with a Schellingian theory of time:

Durch sein sich Zurückziehen auf die erste Potenz wird zwar zunächst eine Beschränkung in ihm gesetzt, da aber diese seinem Wesen widerspricht, indem es seiner Natur nach alle Potenzen ist, so entsteht ein Fortschreiten von der ersten zur zweiten, und damit eine Zeit.⁷⁵⁹

If we read the later texts, we will also find no extensive discussions of the problematic of time. But we can make a suggestion, namely that time is similar to space and is generated through the activity of the potencies – for the potencies are the fundamental functions of productivity, and all activity appears to be the result of potentiation.

Hence every thing builds its own temporal dimensions in the course of its becoming. In order to expand this understanding of time, I would like to draw on some passages from the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*. First of all, it should be noted that in that text Schelling claims repeatedly that the world exists only ever beginningly “anfänglich”,⁷⁶⁰ hence that every moment of the existence of the world is a local spatiotemporal beginning. This means that

756 “Zeit ist vielmehr an sich gekrümmt, da Zeit für Schelling immer die Zeit eines Prozesses ist, in dem etwas entsteht.” – Gabriel, M. “Die Zeitphilosophie in Schellings *Weltaltern*”, p. 43, cited after a lecture from 18 December 2013: <https://www.toyo.ac.jp/uploaded/attachment/14405.pdf>. English: “Time is moreover curved onto itself, as for Schelling it is always the time of a process in which something arises.”

757 “[S]o leuchtet unmittelbar ein, daß die Folge der Dinge mit der Folge der Zeiten Eins ist, daß alle Dinge nur Früchte ihrer Zeiten, und zwar jedes die Frucht einer bestimmten Zeit ist und daß sie nur als solche begriffen können.” – WA I, 159. English: “So it is immediately clear that the sequences of things is one with the sequence of times, that all things are only fruit of their times, with each the fruit of its specific time, and they can only be grasped as such”.

758 Compare here Hennigfeld, J.: “Zeitlichkeit und Ewigkeit. Schellings Theorie der Zeit“ in *Perpektiven der Philosophie* 17 (1991) pp.77-99, hier p. 77-78 und 95, [cited as *Zeitlichkeit und Ewigkeit*].

759 SW VII, 428. English: “Through his withdrawal to the first potency, first a limitation is posited in it, but as it contradicts its essence, in that it according to its nature is all potencies, a progress emerges from the first to the second, and with it – time.”

760 SW X, 344: “Die Welt ist ihrer Natur nach anfänglich, weil sie nicht anders seyn kann als durch einen Uebergang a potentia ad actum, d.h. vom nicht-Seyn zum Seyn. Es ist ihre Natur, anfänglich zu seyn. Hier ist also nicht die Frage, ob sie irgend *einmal* angefangen habe, sondern sie ist ewig, weil ihrer Natur nach anfänglich.” English: “The world is according to its nature beginningly, because it cannot be otherwise except through a transition a potentia ad actum, i.e. from non-being to being. It is in its nature to be beginningly. Here the question of whether it has *at some point* begun is irrelevant: it is eternal because it is beginning as to its nature.”

space and time are constructed anew at every moment of the world-process. Schelling goes so far as to claim in the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* that time is a moment of process, “[ein] Moment des Prozesses”.⁷⁶¹ Furthermore, in the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* Schelling confirms that space and time are both constituted through potency activity:⁷⁶²

[Es geschieht], daß jedes Element, jedes der Gewordenen nur als ein immer wieder Werdenendes zugleich mit dem Raum in die Zeit gesetzt ist, doch weniger ihr unterworfen als *sie* gewältigend. Wie die Expiration des als Eines und als ausschließlich sich aufgebenden Subjektes den Raum, so setzt die Attraktion, die sich als Versuch der Zurücknahme denken läßt, die Zeit, beide zusammen die unablässige Bewegung.⁷⁶³

761 SW XI, 396.

762 In the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* Schelling makes several very odd remarks about the nature of time, and I would like to mention these remarks here and discuss them before I continue with my speculative reconstruction of a potency theory of time. For instance, in the *DNP* Schelling writes about the “Weltkörper”, heavenly bodies, as “zeit-bildend”, time-constructing (SW X, 329): “Der Körper aber ist *nur* schwer und kann nur fallen, während der sogenannte Weltkörper nicht bloß fällt, d.h. seinen Ort sucht, sondern umläuft, d.h. seinen Ort thätig durch freie Bewegung behauptet, wie er vermöge des Umlaufs eigentlich nicht in der Zeit, sondern die Zeit in ihm ist.” English: A body, however, is *merely* heavy and can only fall, while the so-called heavenly bodies do not merely fall, i.e. seek its place, but revolve, i.e. claim its place actively through free motion, as by virtue of the revolving it is not properly in time, but rather time itself is in it.” This could simply be Schelling pointing to our reliance on the movement of the planet in order to measure time, but it is quite esoterically expressed and could possibly be remarking on the nature of the heavenly bodies: they are not fully material, and can construct time somehow through their “heavenly” nature. An earlier passage in the same text however shows that all bodies, insofar as they can overcome the principle of gravity, construct time (SW X, 323): “Denn indem ein jedes Element aus dem Ort, an den es gesetzt, und an den es durch die Schwere (welche ich insofern von der Attraktion unterscheide) gebunden ist, indem es aus seinem Ort gehoben wird, aber diese mittelst der Schwere (welche ich die Ort-behauptende Kraft nennen möchte) behauptet, macht es sich zum Meister der Zeit, und hat, anstatt, wie die späteren einzelnen Wesen, der Zeit unterthan zu seyn, vielmehr diese sich unterworfen, wie es der unablässige Umlauf bezeugt, in dem es nicht todter ruhender Weise, sondern lebendig, *durch* die Bewegung selbst, die nicht eine fortschreitende, sondern eine in sich selbst zurücklaufende ist, seinen Ort behauptet.” English: “For insofar as any such element is removed from the place in which it is set, and to which it is bound by gravity (which to this extent I distinguish from attraction), insofar as it is removed from its position which is, however, maintained by means of gravity (which I would like to call the position-maintaining force), it becomes the master of time, and must, unlike the later individual essence, rather than being subjected to time, have subdued it, as is attested to in the incessant circulation in which it, not in a dead resting manner, but rather in a living one claims its place through the very movement, which is not progressive but rather reverting back into itself.” I propose to read this passage as follows: the “element” at the beginning is an element of the process of potentiation, i.e., before it becomes an individual essence [Wesen]. Hence here “element” is opposed to “essence”, i.e. to the result of the process of potentiation. The essence cannot give itself time anymore, but is subordinated to time. Only its elements construct time for it. There is here a more complex problem, namely that of gravity and attraction, with which I shall not concern myself here, but even if Schelling intends to give the heavenly bodies a special role in the constitution of time, it would be for the following reason: these bodies are not fully materialised, i.e. they are still in the early phases of potentiation and can give themselves they own time – something which regular bodies cannot do anymore, since they are already caught in time. I will however not develop this problematic here any further.

763 SW X, 323. English: “[It so happens] that each element, each of that which has become is posited only as still becoming together with space and time, less subject to them than exerting violence over *them*. Just like the expiration of the subject as exclusively surrendering itself posits space, attraction which lets itself be thought as an attempt at taking back, posits time, and both together – incessant movement.”

Furthermore we could, if we assume the parallelism between space and time to be high, conclude that time, just like space, is neither a form of sensibility, nor merely a concept, but actual⁷⁶⁴ and unthinkable without objects – or becomings – in time.⁷⁶⁵

After those preliminary remarks, we can turn to the relationship between time and the potency dialectic. Since all processes are tripartite for Schelling, time should also have a tripartite structure. The first lines of the *Weltalter* give us a hypothesis: we can consider the past, the present and the future to be the three time-constructing potencies, and time – the product of the potency chain.⁷⁶⁶ Since potencies are placeholders, they can be filled with the three ages – a step which Schelling himself makes in the *System der gesamten Philosophie und der Naturphilosophie insbesondere*.⁷⁶⁷ The question then becomes: which age is to be identified with which potency? We can find evidence that the past plays the role of the first potency in this quote from the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*:

[D]as absolute Subjekt, um einen süddeutschen Ausdruck zu gebrauchen, nur sich ahndet, aus der Vergangenheit herauswirkt, seine Gegenwart als Vergangenheit noch immer kund gibt [...]⁷⁶⁸

Absolute subject, the first potency of the potency chain works out of the past. There is ample correspondence between the role of the first potency and the past: -A, the first potency, is pure Can, the *apeiron*, i.e. that which can be anything at all, and it underlies determination in every instance of potentiation. However, it exerts resistance to this determination, since it has already been involved in a potency process, and because a part of the possibility and indeterminateness of this actor, playing the role of -A is already actualised and cannot be repeated.⁷⁶⁹ After the first potency is determined, it withdraws as exhausted material. This is also the state of the past: it exercises its powers and remains exhausted afterwards. For every

764 SW X, 314: "In der That der Raum ist nur die Art und Weise, wie das Seyn, das zuvor im Begriff war, außer dem Begriff gesetzt ist." English: "Indeed space is only the way in which being, which was before in the concept, is posited outside the concept".

765 See SW X, 316: "Ich kann also den Raum nur darum mir nicht als nicht existierend denken, weil ich noch immer Gegenstände übrig behalte, deren apriorische Möglichkeit der Raum ist. Ich kann mir aber wohl alle Gegenstände dieser Art und damit auch den Raum hinwegdenken. Es ist also nur wahr, daß ich den Raum nicht partiell wie die Dinge, sondern entweder gar nicht oder nur ganz aufheben kann." English: "I can thus only be unable to think space as not existent because I still hold that objects remain – the objects whose a priori possibility is space. I can, however, think all objects of such sort, and with that also space, away. It is therefore only true that I cannot think space away partially as I can things, but may either eliminate it not at all or entirely." Also *ibid*, 318: "Der Raum für sich selbst ist etwas so Passives, Todtes, absolut Subjektloses, Unreelles [...]" English: "Space for itself is something so passive, dead, absolutely subjectless, unreal [...]"

766 See also *Zeitlichkeit und Ewigkeit*, p. 96 – "Jede mögliche Zeit (jeder Augenblick) enthält in sich Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft zumal". English: "Each possible time (each moment) contains in itself past, present and future at once".

767 "Die erste Dimension in der Zeit ist die Zukunft." SW VI, 275. English: "The first dimension in time is the future."

768 SW X, 323. English: "[T]he absolute subject, to use a Southern German expression, venges itself, works out of the past, still announcing its present as past [...]"

769 We can of course imagine a past which has never been present, a first eternal past or original ground, but it is, in reality, an unreachable abstraction.

situation, regardless of how temporally early it is, there is a past, zooming out into the infinitely deep *Ungrund*. The past, therefore, has a passive potency to become other than what it is – hence, to be drawn into a new moment of potentiation and to enter into the synthesis of the present. It would, nevertheless, exert some form of resistance because it contains a certain degree of determination within itself, and it will, when involved in a new synthesis, become a modified, displaced, “presented” past, which then takes part in the construction of a new moment of the potency chain (and of the past), and becomes exhausted and cast out once again. The past is “exhumed” at every moment, cast anew as part of the construction of time, and “buried” again. It, however, stays with us and influences the present. Here we can make use of the *Weltalter* and of Petr Rezvykh’s article “The Experience of Separation and the Event of Love”: Rezvykh writes that the phrase “the past is narrated” [“die Vergangenheit wird erzählt”] at the beginning of the *Weltalter*, does not mean that the past is described or constructed by us (in the sense of social or epistemological constructivism), but that the past is allowed to appear.⁷⁷⁰ The past is brought to the present and is once again lived anew. Then this past is given up – only thus can we live in the present.⁷⁷¹

In order to constantly influence the present, moreover, the past has to acquire the potency to do that (in order to become something at all, in contrast to its own purely passive potency). The past acquires this potency from +A, which takes away -A’s pure passivity.

+A, the second potency, plays the role of an attractor and directs⁷⁷² the pure Can towards itself.⁷⁷³ It is that which the pure Can can be, although it itself (+A) can only stop being. As an attractor, the second potency is the future – a kind of horizon towards which things tend in the process of their becoming. It is important to remark that the potencies, if taken to be completely separate from each other, are bad abstractions, also when we are discussing the

770 Rezvykh writes, quoting Schelling: “To retell, Schelling says, does not mean to describe or render or construct or explain, but to *allow it to appear*. This is the historian’s task: *Wenn im Geschichtsschreiber nicht selbst die alte Zeit erwacht, deren Bild er uns entwerfen will; so wird er nie anschaulich, nie wahr, nie lebendig darstellen. Was wäre alle Historie, wenn ihr nicht ein innerer Sinn zu Hülfe käme? Was sie bey so vielen ist, die zwar das meiste von allem Geschehenen wissen, aber von eigentlicher Geschichte nicht das Geringste verstehen.*” – “The Experience of Separation and the Event of Love. Theses on Franklin Ankersmit’s historical experience and Friedrich Schelling’s eternal past.” In *Social Sciences* 40/1, (2009), pp. 55-70, [cited *Separation and Love*]. The Schelling text is cited after F.W.J. Schelling, *Ausgewählte Werke*, Bd. 4, p. 218. For English, see the cited article.

771 Rezvykh quotes Schelling further: “Wie wenige kennen eigentliche Vergangenheit! Ohne kräftige, durch Scheidung von sich selbst entstandene, Gegenwart gibt es keine. Der Mensch, der sich seiner Vergangenheit nicht entgegenzustellen fähig ist, hat keine, oder vielmehr er kommt nie aus ihr heraus, lebt beständig in ihr. Ebenso jene, welche immer die Vergangenheit zurückwünschen, die nicht fortwollen, indeß alles vorwärts geht, und die durch ohnmächtiges Lob der vergangenen Zeiten wie durch kraftloses Schelten der Gegenwart beweisen, daß sie in dieser nichts zu wirken vermögen.” – Quote after F.W.J. Schelling, *Ausgewählte Werke*, Bd. 4, p. 223. The quote continues: “Die meisten scheinen überhaupt von keiner Vergangenheit zu wissen, als der, welche sich in jedem verfließenden Augenblick durch eben diesen vergrößert, und die offenbar selbst noch nicht vergangen, d.h. von der Gegenwart geschieden ist.” For English, see the cited article.

772 “[J]enes Subjekt [ist][i.e. -A – DK] zwar der Idee nach nur dem höheren Objekt (+ A) zugewendet” – SW X, 307. English: “Yet this subject [is] according to the idea only turned towards the higher object (+A).”

773 “+A verhält sich als *ratio determinans* von – A” [English: +A behaves as the *ratio determinans* of – A] SW X, 305.

construction of time. If the potencies are then taken again as parts of a chain, they become real active abstractions which have more purchase on the world. +A, which I have compared with the *peras* or the Platonic idea, is no static firm state, when it is thought within the chain of potencies (and it is also not a thing, since no potency is a thing). It is the preliminary whole of local possibilities – and at the ultimate limit (that which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is itself abstract), it is the maximal actuality and determination, i.e. God as the ultimate *telos*, the universal point of departure. It is important to understand, that according to this understanding of the future, it is itself not causally inactive. The direction of the potency process, although not deterministic, is causally determining. The odd conclusion is that things do not just arise out of their past, but also out of their future.⁷⁷⁴ The present arises in between the materiality of the past and the ideal – but still causally efficient – horizon of the future.

It can be remarked here that the order of the ages is odd, and that a different process of time-construction can be imagined, one which is more in line with common sense. The product of time-construction (potency $\pm A$) is obviously the present, since $\pm A$ is the actual element of the potency chain, just like the present is actual relative to the past and the future. However, why could pure passivity, pure Can, not be the future, which is then defined through the determining forces of the past? It corresponds far more to common-sense conceptions of time to claim that the past exercises its influence on the present and the future, than to speculate that the future “bends over” into the present in order to influence the past. After all, the first version corresponds to the usual ordering of time. However, if we were to accept this ordering, then the future would become a passive mass of potencies, and the past would construct the future and pull it towards itself – time would then have “moved” in the opposite direction, towards the past. The past would cease to be a “material” foundation on which to build the ages, but would instead have eliminated the future, preventing it forever from being actualized, effectively negating its role as a future and reducing it to a mere well of Can that adds nothing except materiality to time (notice – on the reverse scheme we chose to adopt here, even the past is not a mere well of Can; it becomes a well of Can when some of its potency is exhausted). This cannot be what the future is – not because of some preconceived notion of the future as that which is out there and “must be” actualized, but because such an inversion would do away with its role altogether – it would render the future non-existent.⁷⁷⁵

774 If this sounds odd, one should only remind oneself of the words of the *Einleitung zum Ersten Entwurf*: “[J]edes Experiment, das Experiment ist, ist Prophezeiung; das Experimentieren selbst ein Hervorbringen der Erscheinungen.” – SW III, 276 (*First Outline*, p. 197).

775 The last argument for such an inversion of the row past-present-future can be found in the *System der gesamten Philosophie*, where the first dimension of time is future (presented as the totality of possibilities, the second is the past (the possibility of present actuality – “Möglichkeit der gegenwärtigen Wirklichkeit” – SW IV,

The third potency ($\pm A$) is the present. The present is placed in the crosshairs of the past and the future,⁷⁷⁶ and it is in and through it, that the past and the future bring themselves to actualisation, although not as past and future, but as present. The antecedent past keeps itself in its present consequent as potency, which determines the present negatively. The future also “comes” to the present, because the future influences its antecedents as well as consequents. It is sufficient to look at how future commitments influence decisions made here and now, and even more telling to look at the obvious fact that it is the consequent that determines its antecedent as antecedent of that consequent. The child that is to be born of a mother determines her as a mother, although she is – in a very material sense – the cause of the child. The past and future, both alien to actuality as they do not have being, cease being alien as they become present. They actualize themselves in this present, which in turn lays itself down and fades into the past as it spends its potency determined for it by the future. As the present dies and becomes past, the cycle of age-production comes to an end. The present becomes the past; a new cycle begins,⁷⁷⁷ or as Schelling describes it:

Dieß sind die Kräfte jenes inneren unaufhörlich sich selbst gebärenden und wieder verzehrenden Lebens, das der Mensch nicht ohne Schrecken als das in allem Verborgene ahnden muß, ob es gleich jetzt zugedeckt ist und nach außen ruhige Eigenschaften angenommen hat. Durch jenes stete Zurückgehen auf den Anfang und das ewige Wiederbeginnen macht es sich zur Substanz im eigentlichen Verstand (*id quod substat*), zum immer Bleibenden; es ist das beständige innere Trieb- und Uhrwerk, die ewig beginnende, ewig werdende, immer sich selbst verschlingende und immer sich selbst wieder gebärende Zeit.⁷⁷⁸

Schelling’s *Potenzenlehre* is a particularly interesting model for the emergence of time, since it demonstrates that time occurs in and through two movements. In the first movement of temporal becoming, the potency process runs from the past to the present, exactly in accordance with the usual order of time. The past is used as the material out of which the

275) and the third is the present (as the indifference point of the first two). A discussion of this inverted row can be found in Gent’s *Die Kategorien des Raumes und der Zeit bei F. W. J. Schelling*. Gent does not consider the row which I have discussed in this chapter and found most plausible, namely one where the first dimension is the past and the second – the future.

776 In the *Weltalter*-Fragments Schelling writes about the present that it is the “Mittelpunkt aller Zeit” (midpoint of all time) – WA IV, 3.

777 So is the historical past never an eternal past. The past which has once been present is already wrought with the future after the “first” – or whichever – cycle of potency activity. Equally, future is wrought with the past after this cycle of activity as well, since then the world already contains specific conditions, and not everything can be equally actualiseable.

778 SW VIII, 230. For English see *Ages of the World*, p. 20: “These are the forces of that inner life that incessantly gives birth to itself and again consumes itself that the person must intimate, not without terror, as what is concealed in everything, even though it is now covered up and from the outside has adopted peaceful qualities. Through that constant retreat to the beginning and the eternal recommencement, it makes itself into substance in the real sense of the word (*id quod substat*), into the always abiding. It is the constant inner mechanism and clockwork, time, eternally commencing, eternally becoming, always devouring itself and always again giving birth to itself.”

powers of the present are constituted. In the second movement of time's emergence, the process runs in the opposite direction, as the generation of novelty and order.⁷⁷⁹ During its emergence, time moves in both directions, and both partial processes of time form a cross-hairs on the present, which emerges at the point of overlap as individuated, temporal moment. The individuated moment then gives its potencies up (exerting some of them) and disappears in the past, taking with itself some possibilities of the possibility plenum of the future – or crossing them out as “actualised”.

After this speculative reconstruction, we see that time is a complex, cross-like structure, in which the future breaks into the present.⁷⁸⁰ But although the pre-temporal processes of time-construction run in both directions (from the past to the future and vice versa), time itself has only one direction. A theory of time based around the potencies is also interesting because it ascribes to time an ungrounded character (just as it ascribes such a character to anything else, which is thought through with its help). “Ungrounded” here, as before, means that the ultimate starting point and/or endpoint of a process are taken away. The beginning of time, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is a dark topic, which Schelling never solves definitively. Natural processes, as we have already seen, are ungrounded with regard to their past, because there is no fundamental starting point and no identifiable fundamental unit to the process of recapitulation for these processes,⁷⁸¹ but there also is no ultimate endpoint or an ultimate outcome for the future. The *Weltgesetz*, discussed in chapters II and III, is not an endpoint, but a principle, and God – the apparently last state of the universe – is the reification of the *Weltgesetz*, and hence an asymptotic limit-state, to which things tend, and not a fixed future finish line. This ungrounded character of the past as well as of the future is ideal, insofar as it does not end with a certain concrete state. Furthermore, this ungrounded account of time holds within itself considerable creative power, because the emergence of novelty⁷⁸² is only possible

779 If chaos were understood as the lack of determination, then all potency process would have order as its result, since the potency processes are processes of determination. If chaos were taken to be the actualisation of all potencies taken together, it would no longer be chaos, but divine love.

780 According to an interesting remark in the first version of the *Weltalter*, time forms a strange “time-worm”, insofar as all points of time contain time as a whole – either as present, or as past, or as future: “jede mögliche Zeit [enthält] die ganze Zeit; denn was sie von ihr nicht als Gegenwart enthält, enthält sie als Vergangenheit oder als Zukunft“. - WA I, 148. English: “each possible time [contains] the whole of time, for what it does not contain as present it contains as past or future”.

781 See Iain Hamilton Grant at multiple points in his *Philosophies of Nature After Schelling* – for instance, on the fundamental unit of recapitulation, p. 170: “[S]ynthesizing the constant decomposition of ‘nature as a whole’ charted in the World Soul with the ‘autonomous’ and ‘autarchic’, unconditioned productivity of the First Outline and the theory of auto derived from Platonism, the Universal Deduction of the Dynamic Process (1800) finally renders the basal unit of recapitulation as the dynamic process itself [...]” See also *ibid.* pp. 32-35 for the importance of the “physics of all” as opposed to the search for fundamental entities in nature.

782 The emergence of novelty is that process, through which the consequents become independent from their antecedents, since if the consequents had been fully dependent on their antecedents and exhausted through their activity, there would have been no emergence. The antecedents and the consequents are dependant on each other: “Grounding is operative only where there are consequents, so that the conclusion

through the intertwining of this past and future ideality with the present. To speak in Kant's terms and give a more concrete example: the transcendental ideal is an asymptotic ideal, only complete in the future that will never become present. Despite that, it drives predication at each point in time, determining objects with the concepts that are already it itself, partakes in the formation of new concepts and drives predication on.⁷⁸³ To step away from the example – we have seen that a mechanism close to that with which Kant explains conceptual determination through the transcendental ideal is also active in the triad of the potencies. The novelty which arises in this way is a part of the possibility plenum, not reducible to its grounds, and ultimately rooted in the ideal.

The constitution of time, taken as the incessant activity of the Schellingian triad of matter-past, determinator-present and their intersection-future leads us to conclude, that we are to conceive time and our relationship to it not as linear, but as cross-shaped, with the centre of the cross being the present. This cross-shaped time emerges with each threefold turn of the potency development, where the potencies, constituting a product, also constitute time through arranging themselves as past, present and future.⁷⁸⁴ Because time is constituted in every cycle of becoming (so to speak as a side effect) all cycles of time emerge locally – otherwise we would have had one product, produced in a uniformly emerging time, and the universe would be a temporally indivisible entity, a time-totality, which would once again raise the Kantian third antinomy with respect to time: does this one time, the totality, have a limit? The Schellingian universe is instead ungrounded and the processes of becoming are thus infinitely numerous and infinitely branched – one for each natural product and for local type. Time is, therefore, the rhythm of becoming of the processes.

In these processes of time-constitution, the three potencies *are* – Schelling does not have a theory of time where the present emerges out of a futural state of negation and then disappears in the negation that is the past. The future and the past are not actual, but it is through their activity that the present is constituted. Since Schelling subscribes to the Platonic definition of being (something is when it has an effect on something else), the potencies *are*. However, only the entire structure of the past, present and future has being – the past and future insofar as they constitute the present. Just like in any other potency triad, each potency (whether -A, +A or even $\pm A$) is an abstraction if it is separated from the triad, and has no being. The three potencies, the three ages, constitute a specific temporal topography in which they are the

that ground is itself consequent upon consequents rather than prior to them seems inescapable." - *Nature Thought*, p. 38.

783 See CPR A571/B599-A575/B603.

784 Time in Schelling, although rationally reconstructible, is ontologically factual. On that topic, see Adolphi, R.: "Warum ist überhaupt Zeit, und nicht vielmehr ewiges Sein und Wahrheit? Schellings spekulative Theorie der Zeit und ihre antiken Bezüge – Eine Skizze". In Adolphi, R. und Jantzen, J. (eds.): *Das antike Denken in der Philosophie Schellings*, Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt: 2014, pp. 355-396, here p. 389-391.

landmarks, and it is between those landmarks, within this topography, that the emerging time moves during the process of becoming.

Throughout the three previous chapters, we have examined various angles onto the questions of determination in Schelling's *Potenzenlehre*. In what follows, it will remain to look at an overdue question – how did the *Potenzenlehre* arise, especially in light of its (and this work's focus) on the issues on determination? Through a brief discussion of *Identitätsphilosophie* and a more extensive discussion of Schelling's shift away from it, the above question is what chapter VII will tackle.

Part III: Point of Entry

VII

The Beginning of the *Potenzenlehre*

In the previous chapters we have looked at Schelling's *Potenzenlehre* with regard to its structure, its meaning in Schelling's philosophical *corpus*, its position in the distinction between positive and negative philosophy, as well as its relation to Schelling's concept of God. We have, however, up till now left a rather essential question without an answer – indeed, we have not even posed it. The question is: why *Potenzenlehre* at all? What pushes Schelling to construct such a logical-ontological schema? We do not ask here after the problems which the *Potenzenlehre* could solve as a philosophical tool: that has already been addressed, with clues given to multiple directions of investigation. For example, it was argued that the entire potency schema is to be considered as a dynamic philosophy of becoming, tailored to give an account of how our faculties could arise from the world and capture the world conceptually while being part of it, while also attempting to solve the problem of becoming. It was also argued that the *Potenzenlehre* was an attempt to develop the (in Schelling's eyes) failed Kantian transcendental dialectic out of its dead-end. In this chapter, I would rather want to ask how Schelling turned to formulating the *Potenzenlehre*, what had led him to coin the concept of the potency first in his *Naturphilosophie* and then in the *Identitätsphilosophie*, and how this concept remained with Schelling, despite its modifications over the years, until the very end of his philosophical life.

It can seem odd that I raise this question here for the first time, after an extensive consideration of the potencies and their position in Schelling's philosophy. To this I must reply that the question of the origin and development of the potencies in Schelling's philosophy can only be answered when the potencies' operations and their relationship to other concepts and elements of Schelling's philosophy are understood. Particularly crucial to this question, as to almost any question pertaining to the *Potenzenlehre*, is the fact that the potencies are not at all entities. Now, since the previous chapters have given us a good grasp on the *Potenzenlehre*, we can finally understand its evolution as a theory. The investigation of this evolution in the current chapter cannot, however, due to the length and the methodological limitations of this work, be all-encompassing and hence the problematic of the early *Naturphilosophie*, as well as the full extent of the *Identitätsphilosophie* texts will not be considered. However, the question of what stood behind the gradual development of the *Potenzenlehre* cannot be answered without some detailed excursion into Schelling's earlier writings. Replying to an article by Daniel Whistler

entitled *Schelling and Individuation*,⁷⁸⁵ I will argue in the following that the question of individuation partly stands behind the development of the *Potenzenlehre*. The *Potenzenlehre* is thus not just the completion of Kant's philosophical project or a philosophy of dynamic becoming, but also Schelling's final attempt to provide a solution to the problem of individuation which, *contra* Whistler's argument in his article, the *Identitätsphilosophie* fails to provide. This will then lead me to formulate a hypothesis as to the further development of Schelling's thought: just as Whistler in his article argues that the problem of individuation has played a key role in Schelling's move from the *Naturphilosophie* to the *Identitätsphilosophie*, so, I will claim, the same problem has played a role in the further development of Schelling's thought, including the formation of the *Potenzenlehre*. In what follows, I will discuss Schelling's break from the *Identitätsphilosophie* and outline a few reasons for Schelling's move away from the *Identitätsphilosophie*, all having to do at least partly with individuation. In conclusion, I will address this break, in light of its reasons, as the possible spur for the extensive development of the *Potenzenlehre* in late Schelling. Before all that, however, I will look at Whistler's aforementioned article to clearly pose the problem of individuation in Schelling's work.

I Individuation in the *Identitätsphilosophie*

The problem of individuation has plagued Schelling from very early on and throughout his whole philosophical career. It is perhaps nowhere as evident as in the *Erster Entwurf*, where he writes:

Das Hauptproblem der Naturphilosophie ist nicht, das Thätige in der Natur (denn das ist ihr sehr begreiflich, weil es ihre erste Voraussetzung ist), sondern das Ruhende, Permanente zu erklären. Zu dieser Erklärung aber gelangt sie eben durch jene Voraussetzung, daß das Permanente für die Natur eine Schranke ihrer eignen Thätigkeit sey. Denn, wenn dieß ist, so wird die rastlose Natur gegen jede Schranke ankämpfen; dadurch werden die Hemmungspunkte ihrer Thätigkeit in der Natur, als Objekt, Permanenz erhalten. Die Hemmungspunkte werden für den Philosophen durch Produkte bezeichnet seyn; jedes Produkt dieser Art wird eine bestimmte Sphäre vorstellen, welche die Natur immer neu erfüllt, und in welche sich unaufhörlich der Strom ihrer Kraft ergießt.⁷⁸⁶

785 Whistler, D.: "Schelling and Individuation." In *Comparative and Continental Philosophy* 8/3 (2016) pp.329-344, [henceforth cited as *Schelling and Individuation*].

786 SW III, 18. For English see *First Outline*, pp. 17-18: "The chief problem of the philosophy of nature is not to explain the active in Nature (for, because it is its first supposition, this is quite conceivable to it), but the resting, permanent. Nature philosophy arrives at this explanation simply by virtue of the presupposition that for Nature the permanent is a limitation of its own activity. So, if this is the case, then

Individuation is not just the chief problem of *Naturphilosophie* – it also appears to be almost impossible to solve, as Schelling comments in the next sentences:

Wenn man nun aber fragt (und das ist die Hauptfrage): wie es überhaupt möglich sey, alle diese einzelnen Produkte in der Natur nur als Scheinprodukte anzusehen, so findet sich folgende Antwort: Offenbar ist jedes (endliche) Produkt nur ein scheinbares Produkt, wenn in ihm selbst wieder die Unendlichkeit liegt, d. h. wenn es selbst wieder einer unendlichen Entwicklung fähig ist; denn wenn es zu dieser Entwicklung käme, so würde es überhaupt kein permanentes Daseyn haben; jedes Produkt, das jetzt in der Natur fixirt erscheint, würde nur einen Moment existiren, und in continuirlicher Evolution begriffen, stets wandelbar, nur erscheinend vorüberschwinden.⁷⁸⁷

The answer to the chief problem of the entire *Naturphilosophie* is almost disappointing: the chief problem turns to be based on an illusion. The individuation of natural products and all individuated entities in general, as well as their permanence (or, at least, persistence) is merely an appearance. Nature for the *Naturphilosophie* is unconditioned, and it has no place for individuated products. Schelling reformulates the problem of individuation as the problem of retarding force in nature, the curtailing of nature's productivity at different places in the *Erster Entwurf*⁷⁸⁸ – but he still does not give a satisfying answer to the question of why individuation appears to us so clearly and persistently – i.e., why it seems to be real, or at least why we think in terms of it. It is also left unclear, where a force capable of counteracting the activity of the absolute would originate from. Schelling himself is not satisfied by the solution he gives to the reformulated problem – now and again, he poses the question of the relationship between the individual and the absolute, not only in the *Identitätsphilosophie*, but in the *Freiheitsschrift* and beyond. The solution Schelling proposes to the problem of individuation in the *Naturphilosophie*, mentioned above, has roughly the following structure: nature is bifurcated into two opposing forces, repeated at different stages of development (for instance, in chemistry they are the two electrical poles, and in organic creatures they are the male and female sexes,

impetuous Nature will struggle against every limitation; thereby the points of inhibition of its activity in nature as object will attain permanence. For the philosopher, the points of inhibition will be signified by products; every product of this kind will represent a determinate sphere which Nature always fills anew, and into which the stream of its force incessantly gushes."

⁷⁸⁷ Ibid. English is on *First Outline*, p. 18: "However, when one asks (and this is the principal question), "how is it at all possible to view all of these individual products in nature as only apparent products?" we find the following answer. Evidently every (finite) product is only a seeming product, if again infinity lies in it, i.e., if it is itself again capable of an infinite development. If it engages in this development, then it would have no permanent existence at all; every product that now appears fixed in Nature would exist only for a moment, gripped in continuous evolution, always changeable, appearing only to fade away again."

⁷⁸⁸ See for instance SW III, 42-43 (For English see *First Outline*, pp. 34-35).

et.c.),⁷⁸⁹ and those forces oppose each other, hence retarding each other. The origin of the bifurcation is never specified, and the question of how a retarding force capable of limiting the activity of the absolute arises is not answered. Whistler points out the tension in Schelling's thought which leads to the insurmountable character of this problem within the framework of the *Naturphilosophie*: it is the tension between the concept of Nature as unconditioned and that of the natural product, or nature as the sum of those products. The unconditioned productivity of nature cannot be encapsulated in any product or group of products without losing its unconditioned character, so it seems that Schelling cannot speak of nature as both productive and divided into products. Whistler also correctly uncovers the root of this tension, namely in Schelling's understanding of determination and individuation during that period. In the *Erster Entwurf*, determination is negation, which only makes the problem of individuation harder to crack, as the only way for individuation to take place under such a scheme is for the unconditioned to be limited, which is, in the absence of a thorough explanation of this limitation, problematic. In the *Identitätsphilosophie* texts Schelling poses the question of individuation rather as the question of the one and the many, so the question of how it could be the case that there is the absolute, but also individuated things.⁷⁹⁰ Furthermore, in these texts, according to Whistler, Schelling develops a positive concept of determination, and so comes to an improved understanding of individuation.⁷⁹¹ This will be examined in what follows.

The classical thesis *omnis determinatio est negatio* was, as Whistler points out, popularised within German idealism thanks to Jacobi's attack on Spinoza. The most important point of the attack, in Whistler's words, is as follows:

What determines individuals for Spinoza (and thus for all consistent philosophers) is not an intrinsic property of an entity, but what it is not, its "non-being" as Spinoza put it. Specifically, an individual is determined by its difference from other individuals: "All things mutually presuppose one another and refer to one another, so that none of them can either be or be thought of without the rest, or the rest without it" (227). Jacobi continues later in the *Briefe*, "Each and every living being presupposes all other individual things, and its nature and composition is thoroughly determined through its connection with all the rest" (369). The philosopher's universe, according to Jacobi, is a system of

789 SW III, 44 (For English see *First Outline*, p. 36).

790 On this topic, see Hennigfeld, J.: "Einheit und Vielheit als grundlegendes Problem in Schellings Systementwürfen". In *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 14/2:1 (1989) and Geißler, E. E.: "Das Eine und das Viele. Eine Interpretationsstudie zu Schellings Identitätsphilosophie". In *Theologie und Philosophie* 39/1:67 (1964).

791 For an interesting argument claiming the individuating force in the *Identitätsphilosophie* to be the imagination, see *Individualität und Selbstheit*, p. 60.

negations: what is determinate cannot be defined positively as it is in itself, but only negatively in terms of the fact it is not anything else. Philosophical reason is therefore incapable of grasping the intrinsic ground of an individual. It can theorise relations, but never persons: The possibility of the existence of all things known to us is supported by, and refers to, the coexistence of other individual things. We are not in a position to form the representation of a being that subsists completely on its own. (341)⁷⁹²

Schelling does not explicitly contradict the maxim *omnis determinatio est negatio* in his *Naturphilosophie*. The *Identitätsphilosophie*, however, argues Whistler, makes a step in the direction of positivity.⁷⁹³ At a first glance it is quite difficult to imagine that the *Identitätsphilosophie* would offer any advantages to solving the problem of individuation. *Identitätsphilosophie*, after all, is often taken to be in the literature as the “zweite [...] Phase der Naturphilosophie”,⁷⁹⁴ with no groundbreaking distinction between the two. Furthermore the *Identitätsphilosophie* defines the individual thing as that which is outside the absolute totality (“[w]as außerhalb der Totalität ist”),⁷⁹⁵ and yet claims that there is nothing outside the absolute totality, thus seemingly reducing the individual thing to nothing:

Es gibt kein einzelnes Seyn oder einzelnes Ding an sich. Denn das einzige An-sich ist die absolute Identität (§. 8). Diese aber ist nur als Totalität (§. 26) [...] Es ist auch nichts an sich außerhalb der Totalität [...]⁷⁹⁶

But exactly this, according to Whistler, is the point: everything which stands outside the totality of absolute identity belongs to non-being. Only it is determined by negation, and this lets Schelling formulate a second principle of individuation, this time for everything which belongs to being. Thus he writes:

For, in the *Darstellung*, while from a philosophical perspective individuation is impossible, the Jacobian account of individuation as negation is still deployed to explain the metaphysics of non-being. [...] As such, *omnis determinatio est negatio* is no longer the defining principle of philosophical accounts of

792 Jacobi, F. H.: *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel 'Allwill'*, translated by George di Giovanni. Montréal and Kingston: 1994; cited after *Schelling and Individuation*, pp. 334.

793 On the impossibility of the negative definition of the absolute in *Identitätsphilosophie*, see *Spekulation und Faktizität*, p. 41.

794 Barth, U.: “Annäherungen an das Böse. Naturphilosophische Aspekte von Schellings *Freiheitsschrift*“. In Danz, C.; Jäntzen, J. (Ed.): *Gott, Natur, Kunst und Geschichte. Schelling zwischen Identitätsphilosophie und Freiheitsschrift*, Vienna: 2011, p. 169-184, here p.172. For an extensive defense of this thesis, Schwenzfeuer, pp.: *Natur und Subjekt. Die Grundlegung der schellingschen Naturphilosophie*. Freiburg 2012.

795 SW IV, 125.

796 Ibid. For English, see *Presentation of my System*, p. 357. “There is no individual being or individual thing in itself. For the sole in-itself is absolute identity (§ 8). But this is only as totality (§ 26) [...] There is also nothing in itself outside totality [...]”

individuation, nor does it have anything to do with the domain of being whatsoever; it is relegated to non-existence and the non-philosophical. This leaves open the possibility of alternative accounts of the individuation of beings, and while such a possibility is not pursued within the *Darstellung* itself, an alternative account of determination as affirmation does indeed begin to emerge in the subsequent works of the *Identitätssystem*.⁷⁹⁷

This alternative to construing determination as negation lies in construing it as different degrees of unity – “verschiedenen Graden der Einheit”.⁷⁹⁸ Since being is identity, there can be no qualitative difference between the two poles of identity, and the difference between the two terms of “A=A” can only consist in “magnitude of being” (“Größe des Seyns”).⁷⁹⁹ The two poles, so tells us the *Darstellung meines Systems*, are the subjective and the objective, whereby individuation happens through the preponderance of either one of the poles. Here lies the early seed of the *Potenzenlehre* – the qualitative difference between the two poles of identity is the difference between the subject and the objective, so the identity formula can here be written as A=B, where A is the subject, and B the object.⁸⁰⁰ An individual is then a certain form of the being of absolute identity, arising through the preponderance of either the subjective or the objective and individuation happens through this preponderance,⁸⁰¹ making an individual, therefore, into a determinate form of being of absolute identity.⁸⁰² Those different quantitative differences in being are what Schelling calls, in that period of his philosophy, potencies:

Jede bestimmte Potenz bezeichnet eine bestimmte quantitative Differenz der Subjektivität und Objektivität, welche in Bezug auf das Ganze oder die absolute Totalität, aber nicht in Bezug auf diese Potenz stattfindet [...] ⁸⁰³

If we are here to use the line which Schelling draws at the beginning of the *Darstellung Meines Systems* in order to represent absolute identity, we can represent the above in the following diagrammatic representation (where A+ is a preponderance of the subjective and B+ that of the objective):

⁷⁹⁷ Schelling and Individuation, pp. 337-338.

⁷⁹⁸ SW IV, 431.

⁷⁹⁹ SW IV, 123 (For English, see *Presentation of my System*, p. 355).

⁸⁰⁰ SW IV, 124 (For English see *Presentation of my System*, p. 356).

⁸⁰¹ “Der Satz (§. 36) [dass jedes einzelne Seyn durch ein anderes einzelnes Seyn bestimmt ist - DK] kann also auch so ausgedrückt werden: Jedes einzelne Seyn ist bestimmt durch die absolute Identität, nicht insofern sie schlechthin ist, sondern insofern sie unter der Form einer bestimmten quantitativen Differenz von A und B ist, welche Differenz wiederum auf gleiche Weise bestimmt ist, und so ins Unendliche fort. [Eine Differenz setzt die andere voraus].“ – SW IV, 131 (For English see *Presentation of my System*, p. 361).

⁸⁰² SW IV, 132 (For English see *Presentation of my System*, p. 361).

⁸⁰³ SW IV, 134. For English, see *Presentation of my System*, 362-362: “Each determinate potency signifies a determinate quantitative difference of subjectivity and objectivity that occurs with respect to the whole or to absolute totality but which does not occur with respect to this power.”

$A^+=B$ $A=B^+$

 $A=A$

Fig. 3. Diagram from *Darstellung meines Systems*

This line expresses all potencies as individual (“drückt also alle Potenzen, wie die einzelne, aus”).⁸⁰⁴ Whistler sees the importance of this line for Schelling in that it represents geometrically the fractality of the potencies: “The magnetic line is so important to Schelling because it exhibits one of the most crucial properties of the potencies—their infinite recurrence. [...] If one takes any point on the line, the same structure which is present over the whole line will there recur in miniature.”⁸⁰⁵ The relation between individuation and potencies in the *Darstellung Meines Systems* (and likely in the later writings of the *Identitätsphilosophie*) could be read as follows: first, we could apply Whistler’s point about individuation as negation in the realm of non-being and positive in the realm of being here. In this case, the potencies would be those alternatively positively individuated entities, and all other allegedly individuated entities, (i.e. things) would be only appearances or belong to the realm of non-being.⁸⁰⁶ In this case only the potencies would be individuated, nothing more. In other texts of the *Identitätsphilosophie*, Schelling writes of “ideas” as the only individuated entities; this can however be taken to mean that these “ideas” are only potencies in their ideal aspect. In the *Fernere Darstellungen* we learn that the idea is the immediate mode of absolute knowing (“der unmittelbare Modus des absoluten Erkennens”),⁸⁰⁷ and that absolute knowing is posited immediately with absolute

804 SW IV, 139 (For English see *Presentation of my System*, p. 367).

805 Schelling’s *Theory of Symbolic Language*, p. 111.

806 In order to see how Platonic Schelling can be in his *Identitätsphilosophie*, see e.g. the *Fernere Darstellungen*, where Schelling draws a Platonic distinction between ideas and appearances: “Das ganze Universum ist im Absoluten als Pflanze, als Thier, als Mensch, aber weil in jedem das Ganze ist, so ist es nicht als Pflanze, nicht als Thier, nicht als Mensch oder als die besondere Einheit, sondern als absolute Einheit darin; erst in der Erscheinung, wo es aufhört das Ganze zu seyn, die Form etwas für sich seyn will und aus der Indifferenz mit dem Wesen tritt, wird jedes das Besondere und die bestimmte Einheit.” –SW IV, 394 (For English see Schelling, F. W. J., “Further Presentations from the System of Philosophy.” Trans. Vater, M. in *The Philosophical Forum XXXII*, No. 4, winter 2001, pp. 373-391, here p. 386-387. Cited henceforth as *Further Presentations*).

807 SW IV, 347.

identity.⁸⁰⁸ Everything which is potentiated absolute knowledge can hence be treated exactly as if the potencies constituted absolute identity itself. In any case, I do not want to exclude the possibility here that, in Schelling's *Identitätsphilosophie*, not only the potencies are individuated, and yet I consider this possibility to be unlikely. I will turn presently to Whistler's claim that the usual sense of individuation as negation in Schelling is applied to non-being, and that in the realm of being, individuation is positive.

The positivity of determination in the realm of being in the Schellingian *Identitätsphilosophie* is surely the most interesting point of Whistler's article. It remains to see, however, to what extent this evaluation is warranted. The rhetoric of the *Identitätsphilosophie* which tends to present everything as subsumed within the absolute (which, however, as Whistler has argued, seems to leave room for individuation) forces us to confront the question of whether there is indeed individuation in the "realm of being". The fact that we can talk about the "realm of being" in Schelling's *Identitätsphilosophie* at all is obviously grounded in the *Identitätsphilosophie*'s Platonism – Schelling here describes the appearance ("die Erscheinung"), in which "die Form etwas für sich seyn will und aus der Indifferenz mit dem Wesen tritt", in which the form steps out of its indifference with the essence, and in which each of those (form and essence) become the particular and determinate unity ("jedes das Besondere und die bestimmte Einheit [wird...]").⁸⁰⁹ The absolute unity is opposed to this state of affairs "in der Erscheinung".⁸¹⁰ In the middle of this opposition, the potencies (or their ideal correspondences, the ideas) are located. Whistler writes that the positive conception of individuation allows Schelling to think the "absolute individual".⁸¹¹ In the following I would like to argue that the picture Whistler draws of the *Identitätsphilosophie* is confusing, and then argue that this confusion stems from a more fundamental confusion within *Identitätsphilosophie* itself.

Let us consider first the concept of "absolute individual". This is a highly peculiar concept, and it is not at all clear in what sense this individual is to be absolute. In the *Darstellung Meines Systems* Schelling writes that nothing considered in itself is finite ("[n]ichts ist an sich betrachtet endlich"), furthermore, that to consider things as finite is not to consider them as they are in themselves:

Hieraus folgt, daß vom Standpunkt der Vernunft aus (§. 1) keine Endlichkeit sey, und daß die Dinge als endlich betrachten, so viel ist, als die Dinge nicht

808 SW IV, 121 (For English, see *Presentation of my System*, p. 354).

809 SW IV, 394 (For English see *Further Presentations*, p. 387).

810 Ibid.

811 *Schelling and Individuation*, p. 333.

betrachten, wie sie an sich sind. - Ebenso, daß die Dinge als verschieden oder als mannichfaltig betrachten so viel heiße, als sie nicht an sich oder vom Standpunkt der Vernunft aus betrachten.⁸¹²

These explications allow for two alternatives. It is either the case that the individual in the *Identitätsphilosophie* can be considered as infinite in-itself, and so indeed be an absolute individual, or that Whistler is mistaken and that no individual can be considered simultaneously in-itself or infinite and individuated, and so *Identitätsphilosophie* does not provide an understanding of the absolute individual after all, all individuals are merely relative and Whistler's conclusion is false.

If we look further in the *Darstellung Meines Systems*, trying to reconstruct some of its theses, we can find pointers to solve this apparent dilemma. First, absolute identity is also absolute totality, and an individual is "what exists outside totality", so an individual is also outside absolute identity.⁸¹³ Second, absolute identity is also within the individual, although the individual stands outside absolute identity.⁸¹⁴ So everything, also the individual, is infinite and absolute, at least in a certain respect; that is how absolute identity functions in the wake of its positing: "Alles Einzelne ist zwar nicht absolut, aber in seiner Art unendlich."⁸¹⁵ Hence every individual, taken in-itself, is a totality,⁸¹⁶ an $A=A$, although in each individual thing the identity is posited with the preponderance of a certain pole, hence there is no perfect equilibrium within any individual.⁸¹⁷ It seems like the *Identitätsphilosophie* does indeed introduce the absolute individual, and that this actually is the breakthrough of the *Identitätsphilosophie*. This absolute individual is infinite through its inner totality, i.e. through the fact that it, taken for itself, is a universe. This recapitulation of the absolute within the individual is in accordance with an important principle of the *Identitätsphilosophie*: the reflection of the infinite in the finite.⁸¹⁸

812 SW IV, 119. For English, see *Presentation of My System*, p. 343: "It follows that from the standpoint of reason (§ 1) there is no finitude, and that considering things as finite is precisely the same as not considering them as they are in themselves. —To the same extent, to consider things as differentiated or multiple means not to consider them in themselves or from the standpoint of reason".

813 SW IV, 125 (For English, see *Presentation of my System*, p. 357).

814 SW IV, 132 (For English, see *Presentation of my System*, p. 361): "Die absolute Identität ist im Einzelnen unter derselben Form, unter welcher sie im Ganzen ist, und umgekehrt im Ganzen unter keiner andern Form, als unter welcher sie im Einzelnen ist."

815 SW IV, 133 (For English, see *Presentation of my System*, p. 362).

816 Ibid.

817 SW IV, 148.

818 This is, at any rate, the role of intellectual intuition – to see the infinite in the finite: "Die intellektuelle Anschauung nicht nur vorübergehend, sondern bleibend, als unveränderliches Organ, ist die Bedingung des wissenschaftlichen Geistes überhaupt und in allen Theilen des Wissens. Denn sie ist das Vermögen überhaupt, das Allgemeine im Besonderen, das Unendliche im Endlichen, beide zur lebendigen Einheit vereinigt zu sehen." - SW IV, 362 (For English, see *Further Presentations*, p. 377).

However, the question of the absolute individual does not get its resolution so easily and remains difficult to understand: an individual is what lies outside the totality, but there is no individual in itself, and so nothing really *is* outside the totality. Schelling confirms this for us:

Es gibt kein einzelnes Seyn oder einzelnes Ding an sich. Denn das einzige An-sich ist die absolute Identität (§. 8). Diese aber ist nur als Totalität (§. 26) [also nur die Totalität ist das An-sich].

Anmerkung. Es ist auch nichts an sich außerhalb der Totalität, und wenn etwas außerhalb der Totalität erblickt wird, so geschieht es nur vermöge einer willkürlichen Trennung des Einzelnen vom Ganzen, welche durch die Reflexion ausgeübt wird, aber an sich gar nicht stattfindet, da alles, was ist, Eines (§. 12, Zusatz 1), und in der Totalität die absolute Identität selbst ist (§. 26).⁸¹⁹

What does this tension between the individual and totality mean for the problem of individuation? Three alternatives present themselves here. First, Schelling could mean that each individual is a unity, in virtue of which it is, so to speak, a totality-in-itself, distinct from absolute identity. This, however, is very implausible – what Schelling means by “totality” in the above quote is clearly the totality of absolute identity; he does not intend to claim that everything that exists must form a totality encompassing itself, as that would be a trivial claim. Second, it could be the case, that Schelling here postulates the individual thing as non-being and limitation (the language of “nothing in-itself” suggests this), contradicting Whistler’s thesis. Recall that Whistler claims takes a negatively determined individual to belong to the deficient realm of non-being in which no absolute individual is possible. The account of individuation in the *Identitätsphilosophie* according to which the individual thing is, in all cases, merely non-being and limitation, would have not been any more positive than that of the *Naturphilosophie*. A third, subtler reading of this tension, would be to understand being-individual as a relative concept only. The individual then could be regarded as individual on one hand, and as part of the totality on the other, only really existing inside the totality.⁸²⁰ This demonstrates, also *contra* Whistler, that individuation in the *Identitätsphilosophie* is a bit more complicated than a

819 SW IV, 125-6. For English, see *Presentation of My System*, p. 357. “There is no individual being or individual thing in itself. For the sole in-itself is absolute identity (§ 8). But this is only as totality (§ 26) [therefore only totality is the in-itself]. Remark. There is also nothing in itself outside totality, and if something is viewed outside the totality, this happens only by an arbitrary separation of the individual from the whole effected by reflection. But in itself this separation simply does not happen, since everything that is is one (§ 12), and within the totality is absolute identity itself (§ 26).”

820 The Russian Schelling researcher Petr Rezvykh reads *Darstellung Meines Systems* in exactly this way, connecting it to the problematic of the transcendental ideal, where absolute identity is the ground of all meaning, and the individuals are thought at the limit of the absolute and as its limitation, *contra* Whistler. This way, the individual cannot be separated from absolute identity, and yet is still individual. See *Absolyutnoe Utverzhdnie*, p. 114-116.

positive alternative to *determinatio est negatio* – it would seem to be, if possibly positive on one hand through the fact that an individual expresses the absolute under a certain ratio of potencies or quantity of being, at least still negative on the other. Petr Rezvykh reads the *Darstellung* in this way, which he relates to the problem of Kant’s transcendental ideal: the identity is, according to him, the sum and ground of all sense, and the individual is thought as the limit of that sense, i.e. as that which is pure negation and limit to actuality. The individual then could not be thought as separate from absolute identity, although it is still individual.⁸²¹ What this last answer to the above tension implies for Whistler’s position is unclear to me; in any case individuation in the *Identitätsphilosophie* is more than just the positive alternative to the negating powers of absolute nature.

To recapitulate: the fact that in the *Identitätsphilosophie*, the absolute expresses itself in every individual thing through a certain identity of subjectivity and objectivity with a preponderance of one pole over the other could indeed be considered positive, intrinsic determination of that individual thing, unfolding from within what that thing *is* (namely, a certain expression of the absolute). And yet, the question remains as to how this preponderance of one pole over the other is established, i.e. whether this positive determination is not at least partly dependent on the more familiar negative. *Darstellung Meines Systems* itself speaks of determination both positively and negatively, and limitation plays a rather important role in it. We see this, for example, in the following equivocal line from the *Darstellung Meines Systems* on the determination of the individual through the individual:

Nichts einzelnes hat den Grund seines Daseyns in sich selbst. [...] Jedes einzelne Seyn ist bestimmt durch ein anderes einzelnes Seyn.⁸²²

This passage points to a thing being determined through limitation by other objects, and this apparently is still how the determination of individual things takes place – in an infinite chain, since they are merely nothing in themselves, and *are* only insofar as they are determined by another. This holds even if this determination is causal – the relation of cause and effect is, for Schelling of the *Identitätsphilosophie* period, merely appearance:

Wollte man aber sagen, daß die Philosophie alsdann doch die wirkliche Welt in ihrer unmittelbaren Möglichkeit, nämlich in den nothwendigen und allgemeinen Gesetzen aufzuzeigen habe, welche die Erscheinung bestimmen, wie das Gesetz der Ursache und Wirkung, so antworte ich erstens, daß alle diese Gesetze, weit

821 Ibid.

822 SW IV, 130. See *Presentation of My System*, p. 360: “Nothing individual has the ground of its existence in itself. [...] Each individual being is determined through another individual being.”

entfernt eine wahre Möglichkeit der erscheinenden Dinge auszusprechen, vielmehr wahrhaft Ausdrücke ihrer absoluten Nichtigkeit und Nichtwesenheit sind [...] ⁸²³

To further point to the interconnection between positive and negative determination in Schelling's *Identitätsphilosophie*, we should look at how he treats matter as the first potency potentiating the powers of nature A and B – the expansive force and the contracting force. The two forces are clearly individuated. I would not concern myself extensively with the question as to their exact mode of individuation, but a sensible hypothesis for the individuation of this power is that they determine each other reciprocally. If we look at the text, we do indeed find confirmation to this hypothesis:

B, welches ursprünglich ist, ist das schlechthin Begrenzbare, an sich Unbegrenzte, A dagegen das Begrenzende, und da jedes an sich unendlich ist, so ist jenes als das positiv, dieses als das negativ, also in entgegengesetzter Richtung, Unendliche zu denken. ⁸²⁴

The same is exactly the case of the second potency, that of light. The two poles of the second potency are the unlimited ideal and the real, and Schelling demonstrates extensively how the ideal can be limited within the second potency for the principle of individuation. ⁸²⁵

From all the above we can conclude that individuation in Schelling's *Identitätsphilosophie* is more than the positive determination of the quantity of the absolute. The powers within matter limit each other reciprocally, as do the ideal and real principle within that which is immaterial,

823 SW IV, 396-397. For English see *Further Presentation*, p. 388: "If one wanted to say that philosophy still has to exhibit the real world in its immediate possibility: viz., in the necessary and universal laws that determine appearances like the law of cause and effect, I answer, first, that all these laws, far from expressing some true possibility of the things of appearances, are instead truly expressions of their absolute nothingness and insubstantiality."

824 SW IV, 136. See *Presentation of My System*, p. 364: "B, which originally is, is the simply limitable, in itself unlimited factor in $A = B$, while A is the limiting one. Since each is in itself infinite, the former is to be conceived as the positive infinite, the latter as the negative, therefore opposite in direction". More evidence for the negative determination between the two powers of matter can be found in paragraph 50 of the *Darstellung Meines Systems* (SW IV, 141): "In $A = B$ (als relative Identität gedacht) ist die absolute Identität nur überhaupt unter der Form des Selbsterkennens gesetzt, sie wird in Ansehung des ursprünglich Objektiven begrenzt durch das Subjektive, wir nennen die Richtung, in welcher B (als unendliche Extension) begrenzt wird, die Richtung nach außen, die, in welcher A allein begrenzt werden kann, die Richtung nach innen. - Nun ist aber die absolute Identität als ein unendliches Selbsterkennen gesetzt (§. 19. 20); es kann also auch nichts (z. B. Begrenztheit) in ihr überhaupt seyn, was nicht auch unter der Form des Selbsterkennens gesetzt würde, und dieß wird nothwendig und so lange fortgesetzt werden müssen, bis sie unter der Form des absoluten Selbsterkennens gesetzt ist. Sie wird sich also auch unmittelbar mit A als begrenzt in ihrer Subjektivität, mit B als begrenzt in ihrer Objektivität, und, diese Begrenzung als eine gemeinschaftliche gesetzt, in der relativen Totalität erkennen müssen, es folgt also der Uebergang von relativer Identität zu relativer Totalität als ein nothwendiger unmittelbar aus der Unendlichkeit des Selbsterkennens der absoluten Identität." For English, see *Presentation of My System*, p. 368.

825 On this point see SW IV, 148-9 where Schelling discusses how the ideal principle becomes limited through being posited as equal to the real.

and thus individuation for Schelling appears to be neither positive, nor merely negative, neither absolute, nor merely relative – or perhaps both at the same time, depending on whether the individual is considered in itself or as part of absolute totality. Here, again, we see that Schelling’s preferred way to discuss determination is perhaps closest to the Platonic pair *peras-apeiron*; the Platonism which has always been among Schelling’s philosophical leanings is visible also in the *Darstellung Meines Systems*:

Unsere Behauptung ist also, aufs deutlichste ausgedrückt, die, daß, könnten wir alles, was ist, in der Totalität erblicken, wir im Ganzen ein vollkommenes quantitatives Gleichgewicht von Subjektivität und Objektivität [von Realem und Idealem], also nichts als die reine Identität, in welcher nichts unterscheidbar ist, gewahr würden, so sehr auch in Ansehung des Einzelnen das Uebergewicht auf die eine oder die andere Seite fallen mag, daß also doch auch jene quantitative Differenz keineswegs an sich, sondern nur in der Erscheinung gesetzt ist.⁸²⁶

Having cast doubt on Whistler’s account of individuation in the *Identitätsphilosophie*, I will, in the following, let go of the problematic of individuation in the *Identitätsphilosophie* and turn to the genesis of the *Potenzenlehre*, as it is the proper topic of this chapter. Yet, however it may be, Whistler’s article appears to be a significant simplification and the history of the problem of individuation in Schelling’s philosophy and Schelling’s attempted solutions to it appear complicated and incomplete. However, Whistler’s article highlights a very important point: in the *Identitätsphilosophie* (and possibly after) Schelling does have indeed an at least partly positive view of individuation. This can be seen most clearly in *Über das Verhältnis der bildenden Künste zu der Natur*, a speech from 1806, where Schelling describes the determination of form as positive:

Nicht das Nebeneinanderseyn macht die Form, sondern die Art desselben: diese aber kann nur durch eine positive, dem Außereinander vielmehr

826 SW IV, 127-128. For English, see *Presentation of my System*, p. 358: “our assertion is this: if we could view everything that is in the totality, we would perceive in the whole a perfect quantitative balance of subjectivity and objectivity [of the real and the ideal], hence nothing else than a pure identity in which nothing is distinguishable, however much in the perspective of the individual a preponderance might occur on one side or the other. We would therefore perceive that even this quantitative difference is in no way posited in itself, but only in appearance.” Schelling writes further (English translation to be found as above): “Denn da die absolute Identität, - das was schlechthin und in allem ist, durch den Gegensatz von Subjektivität und Objektivität gar nicht afficirt wird (§. 6), so kann auch die quantitative Differenz jener beiden nicht in Bezug auf die absolute Identität oder an sich stattfinden, und die Dinge oder Erscheinungen, welche uns als verschieden erscheinen, sind nicht wahrhaft verschieden, sondern realiter Eins, so, daß zwar keines für sich, aber alle in der Totalität, in welcher die entgegengesetzten Potenzen ursprünglich sich gegeneinander aufheben, die reine ungetrübte Identität selbst darstellen.”

entgegenwirkende Kraft bestimmt seyn, welche die Mannichfaltigkeit der Theile der Einheit eines Begriffs unterwirft [...] ⁸²⁷

Three pages later he adds: “Die Bestimmtheit der Form ist in der Natur nie eine Verneinung, sondern stets eine Bejahung.” ⁸²⁸

The second very important element of *Identitätsphilosophie*, one which is conserved until the latest versions of the *Potenzenlehre*, is the multi-layered character of the potencies – the fact that one potency, i.e., an individual, is itself composed of potencies, i.e. more individuals. We can see the first evidence to that extent in the structure of the potencies – a potency is a spectrum, just like that of absolute identity itself, and within a potency multiple singular points can be determined through the preponderance of one side of the spectrum over the other. For instance, the first potency, matter, is symbolized as $A=B$. Schelling represents this identity graphically, among other ways, (see §51 in the *Darstellung Meines Systems*), and identifies the poles of matter – A and B – as attractive force and expansive force. ⁸²⁹ Both forces are infinite and their relative equilibrium defines the material thing with respect to its material qualities. Furthermore, it appears to be that these attractive and expansive forces are also potencies, as Schelling writes:

Die Substanz in der Materie ist = ($A = B$), die Accidenzen sind A und B als Potenzen dieses Identischen (§. 64, Erklärung 1) gedacht. $A = B$ ist daher ursprünglich und unabhängig von A sowohl als B, die letztern als Potenzen gedacht, denn es ist das primum existens (§. 51, Zusatz). ⁸³⁰

The inner configuration of matter shows that a potency has particulars within itself, and that those particulars are also potencies. Schelling writes that each particular is itself infinite with regard to its potency (“ist also selbst unendlich in Ansehung seiner Potenz”), ⁸³¹ and that the structure of the universe consists in potencies from beginning to end. It appears that individuation here is simultaneously absolute and relative: every particular is, taken in itself, infinite, but every particular is also merely the potentiation of a totality, of which it is a part, and each particular also consists of infinitely many potentiations, hence it can only be viewed

827 SW VII, 299. English: “It is not being-next-to-each-other that makes the form of things, but the kind of this being: this however can be determined through a positive power, which moreover exerts mutual counteraction, subjugating the multiplicity of parts of the unity of a concept [...]”

828 SW VII, 303. English: “The determination of form is never a negation in nature, but an affirmation”.

829 SW IV, 147.

830 SW IV, 154. English: “The substance in matter is = ($A = B$), the accidents are A and B thought as the potency of this (§. 64, Elucidation 1) identity. $A = B$ is thus original and independent from A as well as B, the latter being thought as potency, for it is the primum existens (§. 51, Corollary).”

831 SW IV, 133 (For English, see *Presentation of my System*, p. 362).

as a particular when taken in itself, abstracted from the potentiations and the totality which is reflected in it.

This chapter has so far presented and critically discussed the reading of Schelling's *Identitätsphilosophie* developed in Daniel Whistler's article "Schelling on Individuation". In the following, I will draw a reconstructive sketch of the potencies and their role in *Identitätsphilosophie*, and identify further problems in relation to individuation in Schelling's work of that time. I will argue that the unanswered (at any rate, unsatisfactorily answered) question of individuation presents a possible reason for Schelling's return to and further development of *Potenzenlehre*, as it is investigated in this work.

In the *Identitätsphilosophie* mathematics is taken as the model of philosophising. This is made clear in the *Fernerer Darstellungen*, which claims that mathematics is the only example of absolute knowledge developed until now.⁸³² Schelling develops a particular interest in the notion of construction, which, along with his general interest in the mathematical method, comes from the first *Critique*, in which Kant writes on mathematical knowledge as the construction of concepts.⁸³³ To construct a concept, for Kant, means "to exhibit a priori the intuition corresponding to it".⁸³⁴ Schelling understands this construction to be close to intellectual intuition,⁸³⁵ and hence as a model for his philosophical method in the *Identitätsphilosophie*. It is outside the scope of this chapter to discuss in detail how Schellingian construction functions, but Schelling retains the Kantian core of this concept: construction requires an intuition *a priori*, hence in construction thinking and being are united. This is why construction is so important for Schelling: it methodologically expresses absolute identity, and hence philosophical concepts are to be constructed – otherwise philosophy could not be absolute knowledge, which it should become. Schelling's earlier philosophical systems are concerned with the objective, i.e. with the powers of nature in *Naturphilosophie* and the subjective, i.e. with the transcendental subject, in transcendental philosophy. *Identitätsphilosophie* is a project of unification, hence the starting point of this philosophy is the absolute identity of the subjective and the objective – $A=A$, the highest law of reason.⁸³⁶ Since within reason there is everything and outside it is nothing, everything falls under this law. An original cognition of absolute identity is posited immediately with the principle $A=A$

832 SW IV, 345.

833 CPR A713/B741.

834 Ibid.

835 On intellectual intuition and its relation to construction see e.g. Schäfer, R.: *Die Dialektik und ihre besonderen Formen in Hegels Logik*, Hamburg: 2012, p. 84.

836 SW IV, 116.

(“ist unmittelbar mit dem Satz $A=A$ gesetzt”),⁸³⁷ and with this original cognition philosophy as absolute knowledge is begun. All possible individuation within the absolute is expressed through the potencies, since those are, as has been mentioned previously, specific quantitative differences in subjectivity and objectivity (“bestimmte quantitative Differenz[en] der Subjektivität und Objektivität”).⁸³⁸ They are also different potential kinds of equilibrium, in which absolute identity could stand. It can be remarked here that the potencies are, already in the *Identitätsphilosophie*, not substantial and not identical to the modalities (possibility, actuality, necessity), but are possible states of everything that exists. This is not yet a functional *Potenzenlehre*, but already here potencies are merely placeholders: this can be concluded from the infinite nesting of potencies within each potency itself: there are two poles, the subjective and the objective, each of which is itself composed of further such poles, and hence a multitude of things can occupy either the subjective or the objective pole. Schelling expresses this clearly in the case of matter:

Also auch innerhalb der einzelnen Potenz sind A und B wieder quantitativ gesetzt in Ansehung dieser Potenz, also hier als Attraktiv- und Expansivkraft, und zwar ins Unendliche, denn jede Potenz ist wieder in sich oder in Bezug auf sich selbst unendlich.⁸³⁹

Every thing is a totality in virtue of this multi-layered structure it harbours at its core, and every individual is infinite in its kind (“in seiner Art unendlich”).⁸⁴⁰ Here lies, for Schelling, the most important property of construction: a construction demonstrates that the constructed has the absolute within itself – this idea of the infinite in the finite can be found in all texts of the *Identitätsphilosophie* period, because in the *Identitätsphilosophie* the essence of all things is one.⁸⁴¹ This is most apparent in the treatment of the procedure of construction in the *Fernerer Darstellungen*:

In der Konstruktion wird das Besondere (die bestimmte Einheit) als absolut, nämlich für sich als absolute Einheit des Idealen und Realen dargestellt.⁸⁴²

Due to this unity of being, the generation of various individual entities in the *Identitätsphilosophie* is seen as the construction of individual entities which takes place through

837 SW IV, 121.

838 SW IV, 134.

839 SW IV, 148. English: “Thus, A and B are also quantitatively posited within the individual potency in relation to it, thus here as attractive and expansive power, and moreover in the infinite, for each potency is once again infinite in itself or in relation to itself.”

840 SW IV, 133.

841 SW IV, 367 (For English, see *Further Presentation*, p. 380-381).

842 SW IV, 407. See *Further Presentation*, p. 383: “In construction the particular (the determined unity) is exhibited as absolute, namely, as absolute unity of the ideal and the real for itself.”

the activity of the universe itself: “[D]ie Erde selbst wird Thier und Pflanze, und es ist eben die zu Thier und Pflanze gewordene Erde, die wir jetzt in den Organisationen erblicken.”⁸⁴³ The construction of a plant or an animal is then the construction of the absolute unity as plant or animal. Each individual thing is a potency of the universe and each potency is infinite with respect to its essence – hence every individual thing is also the universe in itself.⁸⁴⁴ This is obvious in the *Philosophie der Kunst*, with the artwork reflecting the universe.⁸⁴⁵ But according to Daniel Whistler’s book *Schelling’s Theory of Symbolic Language*, this relation is in no way subjective: “‘All creation’ rests on a process of ‘mutual informing into one’ or *Ineinsbildung*. Imagination is thus no longer a faculty, it no longer resides in the subject; rather, the power of forming into one, *Einbildungskraft*, is an ontological process.”⁸⁴⁶ We here have a further confirmation of the thesis that everything can be considered either as an absolute or as an individual, all depending on how it is taken to be.⁸⁴⁷

Such a view on individuality hangs somewhere in between complete annihilation and quasi-absolutisation – it is hence also not surprising that the point of *Identitätsphilosophie* is precisely this balancing at the point of identity between the individual and the universe. However, Schelling does not maintain the balance, at least not really – his claim that the form of each individual thing is not commensurate with his absolute essence,⁸⁴⁸ pushes the *Identitätsphilosophie* deeper into Platonism. The universe is plant, animal, man, etc. only in appearance, in that which Schelling calls the real, finite world (“in der realen, endlichen Welt”), which consists completely of individuals and which has no real relation to the absolute (“[hat] keinen realen Bezug auf das Absolute”).⁸⁴⁹ Treated in this manner, the absolute essence of individual entities is far-removed from the individual entities themselves, and is independent of

843 SW IV, 208. English: “[T]he Earth itself becomes animal and plant, and it is precisely this Earth, having become animal and plant, which we see now in organisational units.”

844 A discussion of this topic can be found in Stoffers, J.: *Eine lebendige Einheit des Vielen. Das Bemühen Fichtes und Schellings und die Lehre vom Absoluten*, Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt: 2013, pp. 203-207 and pp. 215-218.

845 “Im Absoluten sind alle besonderen Dinge nur dadurch wahrhaft geschieden und wahrhaft eins, daß jedes für sich das Universum, jedes das absolute Ganze ist.” – SW V, 389. For English, see Schelling, F.W.J. *Philosophy of Art*. Tr. by Douglas W. Stott. Minneapolis: 1989.

846 *Schelling’s Theory of Symbolic Language*, p. 92.

847 Thomas Buchheim offers an interesting reading of the identity system in his article *Das “objektive Denken” in Schellings Naturphilosophie* an, where this “objective” thinking he writes about consists of, simultaneously, the abstraction from a whole and considering a singular object as a whole, whereby the cognition of this singular becomes objective – Buchheim, T.: “Das “objektive Denken” in Schellings Naturphilosophie“, In *Kant-Studien*, 81 (1990) pp.321-338, here pp.334-335

848 SW IV, 395 (For English, see *Further Presentations*, p. 387).

849 SW IV, 386.

the incommensurate form of the individual.⁸⁵⁰ It is interesting to note that although Schelling names both the universal and the individual factors of form (“Faktoren der Form”)⁸⁵¹ in the *Fernerer Darstellungen*, which might suggest that they both are full-fledged alternatives to the form of essence, the individual form is deficient – and consequently, the individual being is deficient as well. The foregoing observations on *Identitätsphilosophie* seem to bring us to the following conclusion: an individual could definitely be conceived as the reflection of the absolute or as absolute itself, and also merely as an individual. Only when it is conceived as an absolute, this construction results in absolute knowledge and truth.

We furthermore can confirm from these foregoing observations, that individuation in the *Identitätsphilosophie* period is at least simultaneously positive and negative. The distinction which Daniel Whistler draws in his article – namely that individuation in *Naturphilosophie* is exclusively negative and that *Identitätsphilosophie* marks Schelling’s turn to a positive account of individuation – turns out to be a very unclear distinction. Whistler’s article, however, does explore a very promising idea, namely that Schelling was, at the time of the transition from *Naturphilosophie* to *Identitätsphilosophie*, indeed occupied with the problem of individuation. To recall: in the speech from 1806 quoted above, *Über das Verhältnis der bildenden Künste zu der Natur*, Schelling is convinced that determination of form is positive. This is indeed, as Whistler points out, a break from how Schelling conceives of individuation in his *Naturphilosophie*, or at least the first explicit acknowledgement that individuation is positive. And yet, in that 1806 speech, Schelling does not describe the mechanism for such positive individuation (which is no surprise, as that would be misplaced in a public speech). It stands to reason, hence, that Schelling has nevertheless taken it upon himself to articulate an account of positive individuation, and it is quite probable that Schelling’s works at the beginning of the 19th century have been motivated partly by this problematic. This is especially likely in light of the argumentation in the second and fifth chapters of this work, where it was argued that determination in Schelling’s later *Potenzenlehre* is partly positive and partly negative. It is negative through the action of the first potency -A, which through its transformation to potency B determines what something *cannot* be. It is also positive through the operation of the second potency +A, which, after the elimination of the impossible, determines what something actually is. Schelling introduces the language of positive determination in the *Identitätsphilosophie*, and it

850 Compare Eidam, H.: “Das Wissen und seine Realität. Anmerkungen zu Schelling“. In Paetzold, H. und Schneider, H. (Ed.): *Schellings Denken der Freiheit. Festschrift Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik zum 70. Geburtstag*, Kassel: 2010, pp. 41-62, here pp. 51-52.

851 SW IV, 405 (For English, see *Further Presentations*, p. 392).

seems that he has indeed first begun to think and define determination anew with the *Identitätsphilosophie*. However, the break with *Identitätsphilosophie* after almost ten years of developing it, means that it had not delivered the desired results, and that Schelling was forced to experiment further. We have already seen that *Identitätsphilosophie* has produced an equivocal account of individuation – it appears to be partly positive (at least, it seems, when potencies as various quantities of being are concerned), partly negative (when individual things are concerned), and, furthermore, especially in the *Fernere Darstellungen*, merely an appearance. This account, taken in itself, does not really succeed or fail – it is merely a Platonic account of individuation. Schelling, however, abandons this view in favour of new philosophical experiments (like in the *Freiheitsschrift*), and even later in favour of the *Potenzenlehre*. In the following, I will present some problematic aspects of the *Identitätsphilosophie* in light of Schelling's later philosophy, and seek to answer to what extent the late philosophy resolves those problematic aspects.

II *Identitätsphilosophie*, Abandoned

The question of this part of the chapter is as follows: what could have forced Schelling to abandon *Identitätsphilosophie* and think his philosophy anew? This decision – to think his philosophy anew – was, as we have already seen, somewhat of Schelling's usual working method. It is impossible, partly because of this striving towards innovation, to extensively explore and present here the reasons for Schelling abandoning the *Identitätsphilosophie* and developing his late philosophy and his mature *Potenzenlehre*. Nevertheless, I will here make an attempt to formulate a list of speculative grounds which could, especially taken together, explain the Schellingian way away from *Identitätsphilosophie*. The following section is not at all an attempt to arrange all Schelling's writings after the end of the *Identitätsphilosophie* into a coherent whole, as that would be impossible; I would not want to draw any final and definitive conclusions about Schelling's philosophy, but merely to remark to what extent Schelling distances himself from the conclusions of the *Identitätsphilosophie* after 1809, and to what extent he approaches his earlier *Naturphilosophie*, in search for a new answer to its most fundamental question.⁸⁵²

852 For a further helpful analysis of Schelling's turning away from the *Identitätsphilosophie* and his turn towards seeking a positive philosophy, see Schmied-Kowarzik, W.: "Die Freiheit und das Absolute". In Paetzold, H. und Schneider, H. (Ed.): *Schellings Denken der Freiheit. Festschrift Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik zum 70. Geburtstag*, Kassel: 2010, pp. 265-284, here pp. 273-284 and especially Hermanni's *Hegel als Episode*, pp. 240-243, where Hegel's influence on this transformation is examined. Specifically, Hermanni argues that through the diagnosis of negativity Schelling makes in Hegel, he also discovers negativity with the *Identitätsphilosophie*.

The first possible reason for abandoning *Identitätsphilosophie* has already been briefly mentioned; it is namely the way in which Schelling presents causal relations in the *Identitätsphilosophie*. Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* is, to a large extent, a philosophy that investigates causes – causes of sensibility and irritability, as well as those of electricity and magnetism. The *Erster Entwurf*, as well as the *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur*, are investigations of causes and effects. Furthermore, the unconditioned nature is itself called a cause of all substratum (“Ursache alle[n] Substrats”),⁸⁵³ and, as the absolute activity, the source of all natural processes. Schelling's theory of causality in the *Identitätsphilosophie* was, on the other hand, already mentioned – the relation of cause and effect is treated as inessential, merely phenomenal, far-removed from expressing true possibility: “weit entfernt[,] eine wahre Möglichkeit der erscheinenden Dinge auszusprechen”,⁸⁵⁴ “nichtig” and “unwesentlich”.⁸⁵⁵ The absolute identity of the *Identitätsphilosophie* does not create, produce or cause; it is perfect and replete in its equilibrium. This static picture changes with and after the *Freiheitsschrift*. There are two developments in Schelling's philosophy post-*Freiheitsschrift* with respect to causality. The first development comes forth in the *Freiheitsschrift* itself, and is perhaps most clearly presented in it – the concept of ground. After introducing this concept, crucial to his later oeuvre, Schelling spends some time without addressing the concepts of cause, effect or causality at all (for instance, one would be hard-pressed to find a discussion of causality in the *Weltalter*). This work cannot give an exhaustive account also of Schelling's concept of ground, and it has been partly discussed in chapters IV and V, but this much can be said: in the *Freiheitsschrift*, the ground of all that exists is God,⁸⁵⁶ and the law of grounding lies at the core of each predication operation,

853 SW III, 5 (For English, see *First Outline*, p. 5).

854 SW IV, 397 (For English, see *Further Presentations*, p. 388).

855 It is known to me that in the *Darstellung Meines Systems* Schelling describes the relation of cause and effect without describing it as insubstantial, “nichtig” or “unwesentlich”. He, for instance, describes causation as follows: “Je zwei differente Körper, die sich berühren, setzen in sich wechselseitig relative Cohäsionserhöhung und Verminderung. [...] Das Verhältniß der relativen Duplicität ist = dem von Ursache und Wirkung.” and notes: “Das Verhältniß der relativen Duplicität setzt das von Ursache und Wirkung voraus.” (SW IV 158-9; English: “Each two distinct bodies which touch each other posit in each other a reciprocal relative increase and decrease in cohesion. [...] The relation of relative duplicity is = that of cause and effect. [...] The relation of relative duplicity presupposes that of cause and effect”.) However, we must remember that the status of a body, just as that of all individual things in the *Darstellung Meines Systems* is controversial. In case individual things are only appearances, the causal relationship between them, also in *Darstellung Meines Systems*, are only appearances as well. In any case, more important here is the relation between causality and the absolute, which is to be investigated in what follows.

856 SW VII, 340: “Gott ist seiner Natur nach ewig; die Dinge nur mit ihm und als Folge seines Daseyns, d. h. abgeleiteter Weise.” For English, see *PI*, p. 12.

as it has already been discussed in this work.⁸⁵⁷ The law of grounding connects every subject with its predicates through a relation of antecedence and consequence; hence it has a special status:

Schon im Verhältniß des Subjekts zum Prädicat haben wir das des Grundes zur Folge aufgezeigt, und das Gesetz des Grundes ist darum ein ebenso ursprüngliches wie das der Identität. Das Ewige muß deßwegen unmittelbar, und so wie es in sich selbst ist, auch Grund seyn.⁸⁵⁸

Since the law of grounding is just as original as the law of identity, it is also applicable within God – thus God has a ground, namely, nature, which has been discussed in chapter V, and thus God can ground the creation. This exact concept of ground persists in later Schelling texts – it is used in the same way in the *Weltalter*; the potencies in the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* follow this law of ground,⁸⁵⁹ and so do the potencies in the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie*.⁸⁶⁰ This new understanding of ground, once introduced, becomes the cornerstone of Schelling's philosophy, as we have already seen in the treatment of the relation between the positive and the negative philosophies in chapter IV.⁸⁶¹

857 There is a significant difference between cause and ground for Schelling of the *Freiheitsschrift*, where ground is closer to a substrate or *hypokeimenon*, i.e. to an underlying passive antecedent, while the cause is active. This difference is particularly noticeable in the following passage of the *Freiheitsschrift* (SW VII, 365; *PI*, p. 33 for English): “Der Wille, der aus seiner Uebernatürlichkeit heraustritt, um sich als allgemeinen Willen zugleich particular und creatürlich zu machen, strebt das Verhältniß der Principien umzukehren, den Grund über die Ursache zu erheben, den Geist, den er nur für das Centrum erhalten, außer demselben und gegen die Creatur zu gebrauchen, woraus Zerrüttung in ihm selbst und außer ihm erfolgt.”

858 SW VII, 345-346. For English, see *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 17: “In the relation of subject and predicate we have already shown that of ground and consequence, and the law of the ground [Gesetz des Grundes] is for that reason just as original as the law of identity. Therefore, the eternal must also be a ground immediately and as it is in itself.”

859 On how potency B serves as ground for the higher potencies see SW X, 324, 330, et c.

860 See the *DRRP*, for instance this following quote (SW XI, 387): “Da sie [die Potenzen - DK] aber unter sich in dem Verhältniß stehen, daß eines dem andern Stütze, Grund (nicht Ursache) seiner Möglichkeit ist, so wird die ihnen gegebene Möglichkeit des andern Seyns (wir wollen bei diesem hinlänglich erklärten Ausdruck bleiben): es wird diese Möglichkeit nicht für alle eine unmittelbare seyn, sondern nur für das, welches allen andern zu Grunde liegt, allen andern Voraussetzung und Subjekt (in diesem Sinn) und an sich Können ist (den andern ist das Können gegeben von ihm) - dieses also wird das unmittelbar übergehen Könnende seyn und die andern erst sich nachziehen in das andere Seyn.” English: “Since they [the potencies], however, stand to each other in a relation such that one is the support, the ground (not cause) of the possibility of the other, the possibility of another being given to them (we want to remain with this sufficiently explained expression): this possibility will not be immediate for all, but only for that which lies in the ground of everything else, as the presupposition and subject (in this sense) and the can in itself (the capacity, the can is given to others from it). Thus, this latter will become the immediately capable of transition and will first draw the others into the other being.”

861 For more on Schelling's principle of ground, see Grant, I. H.: “World in Middle Schelling: Why Nature Transcendentalises.” in *Pli: Warwick Journal of Philosophy* 26 (2014), pp. 82-108, here pp. 104-105. In this text Grant argues that this principle of ground is not identical to the principle of sufficient reason, because it is also ontological.

Despite this crucial status of the concept of ground, Schelling comes back to the concept of cause in even later texts – ones in which he undertakes an investigation of the Aristotelian philosophy. In the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie*, as has also already been discussed, he attempts to map the potencies onto Aristotle’s four causes. The ground here becomes here one of the kinds of causes, namely the material cause, the “support” [“Stütze”] or the *hypokeimenon*.⁸⁶² In this philosophical period Schelling speaks of God as a cause,⁸⁶³ furthermore, he writes warning against the confusion which mistakes the logical order for the order of being, against “die Verwirrung [...], die entsteht, wenn die logische Ordnung mit der Ordnung des Seyns, und sodann weiter unvermeidlich die wirklichen Ursachen – des Seyns mit den bloß formellen Principien der Wissenschaft verwechselt werden.”⁸⁶⁴ Causes and effects are, for Schelling of the 1840s, actual, not merely formal, and also not mechanical.

The goal of the short discussion above of ground and causality in Schelling is not at all to extensively, let alone exhaustively, present the Schellingian concepts of ground and cause, but to point out that those concepts have changed crucially from the *Identitätsphilosophie* to the late philosophy. We can conclude that, in contrast to the impoverished concept of causation from *Identitätsphilosophie*, in his late philosophy Schelling uses a multilayered robust concept of causation (alongside concepts of ground and grounding) because he tries to develop a dynamic philosophy. Schelling requires this dynamism because his concept of the absolute is also dynamic. The completely static identity is replaced by a creative, self-revealing absolute, unfolding out of itself – by a real source of being. In the *Freiheitsschrift*, only three years after *Identitätsphilosophie* texts like *Philosophie und Religion*, Schelling changes his mind on the subject of perfection completely: while in *Philosophie und Religion*, just like in other *Identitätsphilosophie* texts, perfection is what is static and remains in its state (of, obviously, perfection), God of the *Freiheitsschrift* is perfect precisely because he is active:

Gott ist nicht ein Gott der Todten, sondern der Lebendigen. Es ist nicht einzusehen, wie das allervollkommenste Wesen auch an der möglich vollkommensten Maschine seine Lust fände. Wie man auch die Art der Folge der Wesen aus Gott sich denken möge, nie kann sie eine mechanische seyn, kein bloßes Bewirken oder Hinstellen, wobei das Bewirkte nichts für sich selbst ist;

862 SW XI, 387.

863 For instance SW X, 256 and SW XI, 400.

864 SW XIII, 101. For English, see *GPP*, p. 160.

ebensowenig Emanation, wobei das Ausfließende dasselbe bliebe mit dem, wovon es ausgeflossen, also nichts Eignes, Selbständiges.⁸⁶⁵

Furthermore, God is not merely active, but free in his activity. The creaturely entities which derive from God are furthermore only dependent on him with respect to their emergence. This dependence, Schelling emphasises, is only a dependence of becoming, and the creature has, in its being, also its freedom:

Aber Abhängigkeit hebt Selbständigkeit, hebt sogar Freiheit nicht auf. Sie bestimmt nicht das Wesen, und sagt nur, daß das Abhängige, was es auch immer seyn möge, nur als Folge von dem seyn könne, von dem es abhängig ist; sie sagt nicht, was es sey, und was es nicht sey. Jedes organische Individuum ist als ein Gewordenes nur durch ein anderes, und insofern abhängig dem Werden, aber keineswegs dem Seyn nach.⁸⁶⁶

In further texts of this time period, e.g. the *Weltalter* or the *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*, God is presented as becoming – in the second text he himself has individuality and is, as an individual, the ground of universality:

Nach der dogmatischen, für orthodox gehaltenen Ansicht wird Gott als ein besonderes, abgeschnittenes, einzelnes, ganz für sich bestehendes Wesen angesehen, wodurch also die Creatur ganz von ihm ausgeschlossen wird. Die gemein-pantheistische Ansicht dagegen läßt Gott gar kein besonderes, eignes, für sich bestehendes Daseyn; sie löst ihn vielmehr in eine allgemeine Substanz auf, die nur Träger der Dinge ist. Nun ist aber Gott beides; er ist zuvörderst Wesen aller Wesen, aber als dieses muß er doch auch selbst existiren, d. h. er muß als Wesen aller Wesen einen Halt, ein Fundament für sich haben. Also: Gott ist in seiner höchsten Dignität allgemeines Wesen aller Dinge, aber dieses allgemeine Wesen schwebt nicht in der Luft, sondern ist begründet und gleichsam getragen durch Gott als individuelles Wesen - das Individuelle in Gott also die Basis oder Unterlage des Allgemeinen.⁸⁶⁷

865 SW VII, 346-7. For English, see *Philosophical Investigations*, 18: "God is not a god of the dead but of the living. It is not comprehensible how the most perfect being could find pleasure even in the most perfect machine possible. However one may conceive of the way in which beings proceed from God, the way can never be mechanical, not mere production or installation whereby the product is nothing for itself; just as little can it be emanation where what flows out remains the same as that from which it flows, therefore nothing individual, nothing independent."

866 SW VII, 346. For English, see *Philosophical Investigations*, 17: "But dependence does not abolish independence, it does not even abolish freedom. Dependence does not determine its being and says only that the dependent, whatever it also may be, can be a consequence only of that of which it is a dependent; dependence does not say what the dependent is or is not. Every organic individual exists, as something that has become, only through another, and in this respect is dependent according to its becoming but by no means according to its Being."

867 SW VII, 438. For English, see *Stuttgart Seminars*, p. 210: ". According to the dogmatic view, which is considered orthodox, God is conceived of as a particular, isolated, unique, and entirely self-centered essence, thereby separating Him from all creation. Contrastingly, the common pantheist view does not grant God any particular, unique, and self-centered existence; instead, it dissolves Him into a universal

Moreover, Vicki Müller-Lüneschloß points out a further change in Schelling's view of God from the *Identitätsphilosophie* to the time of the *Freiheitsschrift*: she points out that the bifurcation of essence into merely existence and ground of existence, discussed in chapter V, is also applicable to God's essence, so that God is not a static whole, but harbours movement inside him.⁸⁶⁸ Schelling retains such a view of the absolute until the *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, and even this latter retains significant traces of this view. I do not mean to claim that everything Schelling has written on God in the *Freiheitsschrift* and other texts from 1800s and 1810s is still applicable to or true of the *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, but merely that God or the absolute become, for Schelling after the *Identitätsphilosophie*, a creative dynamic force. This change is also the source of the idea of divine self-revelation, which also first appears in the *Freiheitsschrift*.⁸⁶⁹ This is then developed further, and in the *Philosophie der Offenbarung* we have its final version – the divine revelation, far removed from all merely formal and rational ideas on God:

Die Philosophie der Offenbarung bezieht sich nicht auf das bloß Formelle eines göttlichen Akts, der jedenfalls nur ein besonderer seyn würde, sie bezieht sich auf das Allgemeine der Offenbarung, zunächst auf ihren Inhalt und auf den allgemeinen großen Zusammenhang, in welchem dieser Inhalt allein begreiflich ist. Der Inhalt der Offenbarung ist zunächst ein geschichtlicher, aber nicht gemein oder zeitlich geschichtlicher, er ist ein Inhalt, der zwar zu einer bestimmten Zeit offenbar wird, d. h. in die weltliche Erscheinung eingreift, aber der Sache nach, wenn gleich unoffenbar und verborgen, vorhanden und vorbereitet war "vor Grundlegung der Welt", ehe der Welt Grund gelegt worden war, dessen Ursprung, dessen eigentlicher Verstand demnach ins Ueberweltliche zurückgeht.⁸⁷⁰

substance that is merely the vehicle of all things. Yet God is both of these; to begin with, He is the essence of all essence, yet as such He must also exist, that is, as such an essence He must possess a grasp or foundation. Hence God, in His supreme dignity, is the universal essence of all things, yet this universal essence does not float in the air but rather is grounded in, as it were supported by, God as an irulividual essence; the irulividual in God thus is the basis or foundation of the universal." Compare Korsch, D.: *Der Grund der Freiheit. Eine Untersuchung zur Problemgeschichte der positiven Philosophie und zur Systemfunktion des Christentums im Spätwerks F.W.J. Schellings*, München: 1980, p. 208 on the process of creation.

868 *Natur und Geisterwelt*, pp. 143-145. I, however, would be careful to call this bifurcation "duale Struktur in dem Begriff von Gott" (p. 145 – "a dual structure in the concept of God"), as I am unsure whether Schelling would apply this structure only to the concept of God.

869 SW VII, 347: "Die Folge der Dinge aus Gott ist eine Selbstoffenbarung Gottes." For English, see *PI*, p. 18.

870 SW XIII, 141-142. See *GPP*, 188-189: "The philosophy of revelation refers not to the merely formal element of a divine act, which in any case would only be a particular one. It refers to what is general in revelation, and, above all, to its content and to the great, general context in which this content alone is comprehensible. The content of revelation is first of all a historical content, but not in the vulgar or temporal sense. It is a content that indeed is revealed at a determinate time, that is, intervenes in worldly

The second possible ground for Schelling's abandonment of *Identitätsphilosophie*, tightly related to the first, is the phenomenal character of time and becoming in the *Identitätsphilosophie*. The centrality of the concept of becoming in Schelling's *Potenzenlehre* was already pointed out multiple times in this work, together with the above idea of a becoming God. Time and becoming, in Schelling's late philosophy, are real, at least when considered from within the world – and that is the only point from which one can consider them at all. The merely apparent character of time and of becoming in the *Identitätsphilosophie*, on the other hand, is readily apparent from the first paragraphs of the first texts of that period:

Es ist die Natur der Philosophie alles Nacheinander und Außereinander, allen Unterschied der Zeit und überhaupt jeden, welchen die bloße Einbildungskraft in das Denken einmischt, völlig aufzuheben [...] ⁸⁷¹

Furthermore, the potencies in this period are all simultaneous and eternal, with no relation to time – “ewig, und ohne alle Beziehung auf die Zeit”⁸⁷² – their construction is not a generation, but merely a presentation. Despite the language of “effusive” [ergießende] powers and processes,⁸⁷³ this “effusion” and the processuality is at no point explained in the *Identitätsphilosophie*. This stands in marked contrast to the late *Potenzenlehre*, which is a philosophy of becoming *par excellence*. As I have already mentioned and argued in Chapter VII, time and space in the *Potenzenlehre* are not merely appearances, but are to be viewed as real, if emerged. All of the *Freiheitsschrift*, the *Weltalter*, and the *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen* present a process of becoming (to various degrees of success) out of God's ground, so that this ground (and with it the individual wills and strivings, as well as divine wrath) is overcome through divine love. In order to give yet another evidence to the centrality of dynamism and becoming for Schelling in the *Potenzenlehre*, I turn once again to the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*. The *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* asks, among other things, after matter and finds it answer:

Der metaphysische Begriff der Materie ist darum vielleicht der, schwierigste, weil die Materie etwas Wirkliches, also Actus seyn muß und doch gegen das, was aus ihr werden soll, sich wieder als Potenz verhält. Daher kann die Materie nicht, wie

phenomena. Yet according to its subject matter it is nonetheless veiled and hidden, as it was present and prepared ‘before laying the foundation of the world,’ before the foundation of the world had been laid, whose origin and proper understanding thereof leads back to that which is beyond this world.”

871 SW IV, 115 – See *Presentation of My System*, p. 349: “It is the nature of philosophy to completely suspend all succession and externality, all difference of time and everything which mere imagination mingles with thought [...]” This is expressed even clearer and more concisely later in the text (SW IV, 119): “Nichts ist dem Seyn an sich nach entstanden[.]”

872 SW IV, 135.

873 See e. g. SW IV, 128.

Aristoteles gethan, unter die Principien gesetzt werden; sie ist selbst erst etwas Gewordenes, sie ist das erste Wirkliche, das sich aber selbst wieder zur Potenz für anderes Wirkliche herabsetzt. Die Materie kann nicht ursprünglich, wie bei Aristoteles, sie kann selbst nur schon in Folge eines Werdens gesetzt seyn.⁸⁷⁴

The entire *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* is the answer to this problematic of matter – it investigates and presents the becoming of matter and of material individual things. Here we see that the language and the questions of the earlier *Naturphilosophie* return prominently in the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*. However, an important difference lies in the fact that, in the late philosophy, Schelling still accepts that which he has acknowledged in the *Identitätsphilosophie* – determination is for him not merely negative anymore:

Man kann hier nicht mit dem von Spinoza herkommenden, in neuerer Zeit oft wiederholten, aber auch bloß formell zu verstehenden Satz: *determinatio est negatio* auskommen. Die tiefere Erklärung liegt vielmehr darin, daß nichts selbständig heißen kann, was nicht auch nicht seyn kann. Denn die Freiheit besteht nicht im seyn Können (wenigstens ist diese Freiheit eine trügerische), sondern im nicht seyn Können.⁸⁷⁵

Hence, the potencies stand with each other not only in a relation of extainment, and their interaction is in no way merely mechanistic – it is precisely in the potencies (that which has being), and not in being itself that the independent character of things lies, and it is precisely from them that the freedom of becoming stems.⁸⁷⁶

874 SW X, 310. English: "The metaphysical concept of matter is hence perhaps the most difficult, because matter must be something actual, i.e. Actus, and still relate to that which shall become of it as potency. Thus we cannot posit matter among the principles, as Aristotle did; it is itself something that has become, it is the first actual, which however reduces itself again to potency for another actual. Matter cannot be originally, like in Aristotle, it can only be already in consequence of a becoming."

875 SW X, 348. English: "We cannot agree here with the merely formal principle, originating in Spinoza and repeated in recent times: *determinatio est negation*. The deeper explanation lies rather in that nothing can be called independent that cannot also not be. For freedom consists not in being able to be (at the very least this freedom is deceptive), but in being able not to be."

876 Ibid.: "Die Potenz – das nicht Seyn – und damit die Selbständigkeit wird dem bloß Seyenden, dem B, nur in dem nachfolgenden Proceß mitgetheilt. In Folge dieser Wirkung, wodurch die Materie verinnerlicht, in Potenz zurückgesetzt wird, existirt nun nicht mehr bloße Materie oder überhaupt nur Eins = B, sondern es existirt nun ein Mittleres, aus Seyn und nicht Seyn, aus B und A (wenn dieß die Potenz bedeutet) gleichsam Zusammengewachsenes, Concretus. Mit diesem, das ein Selbständiges, aus B Herausgetretenes, Herausgehobenes, insofern ein von B ebenso wie von der A an ihm setzenden Ursache Unabhängiges ist, mit diesem ist ein völlig Neues, zuvor nicht Gewesenes gesetzt, das nun berechtigt ist, sich als für sich Seyendes, als eine eigne Welt zu geriren, die gegen alles andere sich abschließt und jedem Fremden das Eindringen in sich verwehrt." English: "The potency – the non-being – and with it the independence are shared with that which merely has being, the B, only in the subsequent process. In consequence of this effect, whereby matter becomes inner and is set back into potency, there is no more pure matter or One=B at all, but rather an intermediate, grown together simultaneously from being and non-being, from B and A (where this signifies the potency), and concrete. With this – with what is independent, coming out from B and lifted out from it, insofar as it is independent from B as well as from

A further, and perhaps the most important reason for Schelling's rejection of the *Identitätsphilosophie* and revision of his philosophical project, although less relevant for the purposes of this work, is the status of evil. In the *Identitätsphilosophie* the subject of evil is not addressed directly, but in *Philosophie und Religion* we find enough evidence to extrapolate what the *Identitätsphilosophie* Schelling thinks about evil. In this text, Schelling praises Neoplatonism and its adherents, claiming that they have captured the spirit of Plato all the more purely and deeply – "sie [haben] noch immer reiner und tiefer den Geist ihres Ahnherrn aufgefaßt",⁸⁷⁷ and this is because they have understood matter to be nothing. To conceive of matter as somehow substantial, not just an appearance, would, for Schelling of this time, be a "crude" ("grober") realism, and a philosophy that has more than one principle – a principle of being and light as well as a principle of privation and darkness – would be equally "crude":

An dem leeren Nichts aber kann nichts sich reflektiren oder durch dasselbe getrübt werden, und vor dem Allguten oder gleich-ewig mit ihm kann kein böses Princip oder ein Princip des Nichts seyn; denn dieses ist überall nur von der zweiten und nicht von der ersten Geburt.⁸⁷⁸

The text is here very polemical – Schelling attacks the thinkers who want to think God as the cause of matter and originator of evil, and treats matter as pure nothingness⁸⁷⁹ – a view which he later criticises very strongly. Schelling's words here are the best evidence for this contrast:

Allgemein gesprochen: sollte die vielen, welche sich ohne Beruf, von leerem Dünkel getrieben, an die hohe Frage wagen, nicht schon die einfachste Reflexion belehren, daß sie gleich unwissend sind, sie mögen das Absolute zum positiv Hervorbringenden des Endlichen machen, oder jenem ein Negatives unterlegen, gleichviel ob sie es zuerst als Materie mit unendlicher Mannichfaltigkeit von Qualitäten, oder, nachdem sie ihm die Mannichfaltigkeit abgebleicht, als ein bloßes leeres Unbestimmtes angeben, oder endlich gar zum Nichts machen? Denn in diesem wie in dem ersten Falle wird Gott zum Urheber des Bösen gemacht.

that cause which posits A to it, with this something fully new, hitherto not existent is posited, now entitled to manifest itself as existing for itself, as its own world, excluding itself against everything else and barring to everything any foreign influence on itself."

877 SW VI, 37. See Schelling, F. W. J., *Philosophy and Religion*. Trans. K. Ottmann, Putnam: Spring Publications, 2000, pp. 25-26. Cited henceforth as *Philosophy and Religion*.

878 Ibid. See *Philosophy and Religion*, p. 25-26: "[N]othing can be reflected in nothingness or beclouded by the same, and there can be no evil principle or principle of nothingness before the highest good [Algut], or everlasting with it, because the former is only a second-born, never a first-born."

879 The relation between the absolute and the world according to the *Identitätsphilosophie*-phase remains complicated, which was partly discussed in chapter V. More on the status of God as the creator of the world and source of actuality cannot be said here. The problem of the apparently unsubstantial character of matter is resolved, however, through its relative non-being – we remember that each entity is non-being relative to a higher level, but is being at its own. Furthermore, the *Freiheitsschrift*, through its claim that every system is a pantheism, posits a particularly pertinent question about the status of evil as a privation: what does it mean in a pantheism, where God is omnipresent, to be "removed" from God?

Die Materie, das Nichts hat für sich durchaus keinen positiven Charakter; es nimmt ihn erst an und wird zum bösen Princip, nachdem der Abglanz des guten mit ihm in Conflict tritt.⁸⁸⁰

This is precisely the view which Schelling criticises in the *Freiheitsschrift* in light of his new understanding of freedom.⁸⁸¹ The “real and living freedom” (“reale und lebendige Freiheit”), he writes, is a capacity for good and evil (“Vermögen des Guten und des Bösen”).⁸⁸² The positive character of evil is necessary for actual freedom; were evil mere privation *à la* Neoplatonism, then wills and their actions would be determined in virtue of their distance from the absolute. The *Freiheitsschrift* Schelling finds, therefore, that evil is the separation of two principles, which must be united in human spirit: the dark principle of ground, or individual will, and the principle of light, or the universal will.⁸⁸³ These principles are divided through that which Schelling calls fear of life (“Angst des Lebens”),⁸⁸⁴ a fear of the all-encompassing unity of being and the Universal will, which strives to destroy everything creaturely. This dissolved identity between the two principles of spirit is furthermore not in itself disharmony, but it engenders disharmony through a false unity of those principles⁸⁸⁵ – it seems as if the dissolved identity is posited again, but with a preponderance of the individual will. We can see that the logic of equilibrium from the *Identitätsphilosophie* is still there in the *Freiheitsschrift*, although it is clearly used differently. Here the general reason for Schelling’s turn away from his *Identitätsphilosophie* can finally be localised: in light of a dynamisation of philosophy, the positivity of becoming, of evil, or error plays for Schelling a far greater role.⁸⁸⁶ The potencies,

880 SW VI, 37-38. See *Philosophy and Religion*, p. 26: “Generally speaking, should not the many who, without vocation and driven by vain arrogance, venture to address this lofty question have already learned by the simplest of reflections that they are equally ignorant when they make the Absolute into a force that positively brings forth the finite world, or attribute to it an underlying negative aspect, irrespective of whether it is posited first as matter with infinite manifoldness of qualities, as mere empty indeterminateness after the manifoldness has been scrubbed out of it, or even as mere nothingness? Here, as in the first case, God is made the originator of evil. Matter as nothingness by no means possesses a positive character; it only takes it on, prior to becoming an evil principle, after the resplendence of that which is good comes into conflict with it.”

881 For an investigation of how becoming, in some Schellingian texts, unfolds from in excess and in some others – from a lack, see Ewertowski, J.: *Die Freiheit des Anfangs und das Gesetz des Werdens. Zur Metaphorik von Mangel und Fülle in F. W. J. Schellings Prinzip des Schöpferischen*, Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt: 1999, pp. 50-58.

882 SW VI, 352.

883 SW VI, 363-364.

884 SW VI, 381.

885 SW VI, 371.

886 Christian Iber goes so far as to argue, that evil is the condition of freedom and personality (“schöpfungstheologische Bedingung menschlicher Freiheit und Personalität”). See Iber, C.: “Prinzipien von Personalität in Schellings ‚Freiheitsschrift‘“. In Buchheim, T. und Hermanni, F. (Ed.): “*Alle Persönlichkeit ruht auf einem dunkeln Grunde*“. Schellings Philosophie der Personalität, Berlin: 2004, pp. 119-136, here p. 127.

with their structural dynamic of powers, out of which a philosophical thinking of human personality in the *Anthropologisches Schema* is constructed, present an improved means of thinking and understanding the powers of human personality and spirit, as well as the equilibria of these powers. Insofar as the *Potenzenlehre* could be viewed as giving an improved account of individuation and insofar a serious engagement with evil and responsibility would require a robust account of individuation,⁸⁸⁷ the later *Potenzenlehre* has, also in the sphere of ethical thinking, an advantage over earlier versions.

My last remark over Schelling's abandonment of *Identitätsphilosophie*, yet again with regard to the relation between the absolute and the individual, is the fact that the systematic presentations of *Identitätsphilosophie* share a structural feature with the *Weltalter*. The *Weltalter* attempted, as has been argued in chapter V of this work, to present the absolute as a whole, and from a standpoint which is not at all possible. The *Identitätsphilosophie*, with its attempt to present a totality, aims to accomplish the same. These two periods in Schelling's philosophical *oeuvre* – the *Identitätsphilosophie* and the times of the *Weltalter* – demonstrate how important it is for a philosophy that wants to think the absolute and the world without fully equating the two to postulate a gap between these two, also if this philosophy is a kind of pantheism.⁸⁸⁸ The attempt of perspectiveless perspective in the *Weltalter* causes in reality a constant switching of

887 Compare Alderwick, C.: "Nature's Capacities. Schelling and Contemporary Power-Based Ontologies" in *Angelaki* 24/1 (2016) pp. 59-76, here p. 71.

888 Markus Gabriel writes in his text *Das Absolute und die Welt in Schellings ‚Freiheitsschrift‘*, that the relation between the absolute and the world leads thought into an aporia. This aporetic relation, obtaining in a self-reflexive world, can only be conceived by postulating a gap between absolute reality (so, the independent, the absolute) and thought. A sheer continuity between the absolute and the world, so, a kind of monism, would make the world unobservable. Gabriel writes, quoting Niklas Luhmann: "Ohne eine noch so minimale Differenz (und sei es die zwischen dem Einen und seinem bloß formalen Beobachter) kann es überhaupt nichts geben. Eine völlig entropische Welt wäre nicht beobachtbar. Niklas Luhmann drückt diesen Sachverhalt folgendermaßen aus: „Wollte ein Universum sich selbst beobachten, müßte es in sich ein geschlossenes System ausdifferenzieren, das auf Distanz gehen und etwas als etwas bezeichnen kann. Ein bloßes Kontinuum ist selbstbeobachtungsunfähig [...]" – Gabriel, M.: *Das Absolute und die Welt in Schellings ‚Freiheitsschrift‘*. Bonn: 2006, p. 31. In English: "Without a very minimal difference (be it between the one and its merely formal observer) there can be nothing at all. A fully entropic world would not be observable. Niklas Luhmann expresses this fact thus: 'If a universe wanted to observe itself, it must have had to differentiate a closed system within itself, which could keep a distance and designate something as something. A sheer continuum is incapable of self-observation [...]" Gabriel adds further: "[D]as Absolute ist nichts – als das Absolute. [...] Mit dem Absoluten hat es nichts auf sich, außer daß es das Absolute ist. Jede weitere Bestimmung des Absoluten würde es zu etwas machen, das es nicht ist. Es ist, wie sein Name sagt, das Abgelöste [...], Unbezogene, gegen jede Bestimmung Indifferente." – *ibid* p. 15. English: "[T]he absolute is nothing – as the absolute. [...] With the absolute, it has nothing on itself, other than that it is the absolute. Each further determination of the absolute would make it into something which it is not. It is, as its name suggests, the detached [...], unrelate, indiffirent to every determination." The irony here lies in the fact that we can only think the absolute as relative to something, but nevertheless as independent – hence the gap.

perspective – in the exact same way, the perspectives shift in the *Identitätsphilosophie*: from the perspective of the absolute in which there are no individuals as such to that of the individuals, where each thing is a totality in itself.⁸⁸⁹ In the entire period of *Identitätsphilosophie* Schelling has only seriously evaluated the necessity and problematic character of such a split, namely in *Philosophie und Religion*, through an endorsement of Neoplatonism and the positing of a fissure between God and the world – but there, it has been considered only in the sense that the world is lacking perfection and stands in no real relation to God. In the above, I have already described the problematic character of this way of posing the issue. After the *Weltalter*, Schelling acknowledges this problem of a necessary gap between God and world, and thinks that the philosophy of revelation solves it:

Für die wahre Einsicht ist daher alles daran gelegen, daß die Welt nicht als eine bloße nothwendige Emanation Gottes oder irgend eines andern Principis erscheine. Dieß zu verhindern, ist aber nothwendig, daß zwischen der Ewigkeit und der Schöpfung ein Interstitium, ein beide voneinander abhaltender, beide zugleich scheidender und vermittelnder Zwischenraum sey. Wenn man, wie es gewöhnlich ist, sagt, daß die Zeit erst mit der Schöpfung angefangen habe, so muß man demgemäß auch sagen, daß zwischen der absoluten Ewigkeit und der Zeit etwas in der Mitte sey, das sie zugleich trenne und verbinde. Dieses zwischen Ewigkeit und Zeit in der Mitte Stehende kann aber nur das seyn, was noch nicht wirklich Zeit und insofern der Ewigkeit gleich ist, inwiefern es aber Möglichkeit der ist, insofern von der absoluten Ewigkeit unterschieden ist, aber doch in sich selbst noch keine Folge von Zeiten, also eine wahre Ewigkeit ist.⁸⁹⁰

Unfortunately, I cannot here unpack the fascinating implications of this passage for the Schellingian idea of freedom, but the mentioned possibilities between time and eternity provide another clue as to Schelling's recognition of the necessity of an "interstitium" between the absolute and the potencies, thus making the reconstruction of the relationship between the potency dynamic and God as presented in chapter V more likely and pointing towards the idea

889 This way of thinking about the *Identitätsphilosophie* is actually interestingly consonant with the way Marcela Garcia thinks about the positive and negative philosophy in light of the problematic of universality and individuality.

890 SW XIII, 305-306. English: "For true insight, everything is connected to the fact that the world does not appear as a mere necessary emanation of God or some other principle. To prevent this, it is necessary that between eternity and creation there be an interstitium, a simultaneously dividing and mediating interspace, holding both from each other, the dividing and mediating interspace between the two. If we say, as it is customary, that time has first begun with creation, so we must accordingly also say that between absolute eternity and time something be in the middle, that it, as it were, divide and connect. That which stands between eternity and time in the middle can only that which is not yet actually time and thus the same as eternity, but insofar as it is the possibility of time, it is in that respect different from absolute eternity, but in itself still not a sequence of times, hence a true eternity."

that Schelling indeed has used the potencies as a solution to his philosophical problems.⁸⁹¹ In light of this discussion on Schelling's abandonment of the *Identitätsphilosophie*, I propose that Schelling's *Potenzenlehre* is a possible answer to the problematics of causality and grounding, becoming and activity, the relationship between individual things and the absolute, as well as freedom and evil. All these topics are closely related to the problem of individuation, and all these questions seek, one way or another, after individuals: an individual, under certain conditions, is a ground or cause, an individual is active or produced in a process of becoming, an individual requires its articulation with respect to the absolute, and a singular subject, an individual, is free and capable of evil. A solution to the problem of individuation is especially important for a theory of personality, which in turn would be crucial in light of the importance of divine personality for Schelling's late philosophy, analysed briefly in chapter V, where it was defined after Temilo van Zantwijk as unity of principles. This unity of principles is fluid and dynamic – we have seen an example of this dynamism in the *Freiheitsschrift*, with the splitting and recombination of principles leading towards evil. But, as the goal of this work consists in presenting Schelling's *latest* philosophical phase of the *Potenzenlehre* as generally as possible, we will in what follows, to seal the discussion of individuation, turn to the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* and the *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie* to examine how those two texts deal with this issue.

From a reading of both those texts, one discovers that they, sadly, do not have much to say about individuation. Nevertheless, some important points concerning the issue can be extracted, since in this period Schelling is indeed concerned with the problem of individuation, all thanks to his positive philosophy. The positive philosophy is a philosophy of becoming, living, historical things, hence the problem of individuation lies at its very core. This is precisely why God himself is, for Schelling of this time, an individual and a person, living and in constant becoming. The potencies are also individuals,⁸⁹² although they are active on nested levels. From this we can already deduce that individuation in the *Potenzenlehre* is also nested and fractal, with individuals within other individuals. This is particularly sensible in light of the fact that Schellingian philosophy does not accept a certain fundamental level of substance or even activity. The potencies are, as discussed in Chapter II, functionally determined; a potency is

891 Nota bene: I argue that the three potencies do not correspond to the three modalities (possibility, actuality, necessity), but not that the potencies do not express the possibilities of becoming.

892 SW XI, 302: “- A + A ± A sind für sich Einzelne = die καθ’ ἑκάστα; sie sind noch nicht das Allgemeine selbst [...]”. English: “- A + A ± A are individual for themselves = die καθ’ ἑκάστα; they are not yet the general itself [...]”.

defined through the role it plays, its function in the process of becoming. At the first glance, there is a contrast between this mode of individuation (individuation through function), and that which individuates bodies, namely the force of cohesion. Yet, cohesion is not at all mere attractive force, it is instead spiritual, since that which actually inflicts determination on the body is “spirit”:

Das Wesen des Körpers ist Geist, nur auf der tiefsten Stufe. Mag man Materie und Geist einander entgegensetzen, Körper und Geist ist kein Gegensatz. Der Körper, der aus jeder Auflösung immer wieder in derselben stereometrisch regelmäßigen Gestalt anschießt, erscheint hier als ein seine Gestalt sich selbst bestimmender.⁸⁹³

What is meant here is not only human spirit: if the methodological schema of the potencies developed in chapter II is applied to this paragraph, “spirit” here becomes the positively determining potency +A. “Spirit” can, according to an epistemological reading, refer to human spirit, but also, according to an ontological reading, a real determining power. The determination of bodies would then itself be produced through the potencies, through this self-determining structure, which nevertheless comes with a dose of necessity.⁸⁹⁴ This is the structure of positive and negative determination from chapter II: the matter of an individual entity is partly a determining factor, since it determines what something cannot be, and an entity is also partly determined through positive power. Since the determination of potencies is functional, and since the third potency is actually the product of one coil of three potencies, we could come to the following somewhat speculative reconstructive conclusion: namely that the determination of entities is functional, dependant on their activity and role as essence and as ground of something else. Such a functional reading of Schelling does not contradict any point in his later writings on the potencies. Furthermore, it seems that Schelling has himself attempted to express something similar when investigating the persistence of things:

Wie kommt es nun aber, daß nicht jedes doch nur einer besonderen Stufe (der Verinnerlichung) angehöriges Existirendes im Fortgang wieder vernichtet,

893 SW X, 355. English: “The essence of the body is spirit, only at the deepest level. One may oppose matter and spirit, but body and spirit do not form an opposition. The body, which always zeroes in onto the same stereometrically regular shape, appears here as determining its own shape by itself.”

894 The tension between necessity and self-determination is important for individuation in the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* (Ibid): “Was ist nun aber dieses sich seine Gestalt selbst Bestimmende, die Gestalt im Werden, also auch noch vor dem Werden Besitzende, was ist es anders als ein überhaupt, wenn auch mit Nothwendigkeit, sich selbst Bestimmendes?” English: “Now, what is that which determines its form by itself, the form in becoming, thus also still possessing becoming? What is it other than that which is at all self-determining, if also with necessity?” We notice here that the self-determining things in this passage are not persons, not even animals and plants, but ions and chemical substances – nature is self-determining down to its lowest levels.

nämlich selbst in eine höhere Stufe fortgeführt wird, wie erklärt sich – nicht eine Mannichfaltigkeit oder Stufenfolge überhaupt, sondern eine bestehende und bleibende? [...] Diese Fragen selbst schon zeigen, daß mit den gegenwärtigen Ansichten eine höhere und freiere Stufe der Betrachtung als mit früheren gewonnen ist.⁸⁹⁵

This “higher and freer level of consideration” is nothing more – or less – than a level at which there is a final cause for things, the level of organic nature.⁸⁹⁶ It turns out that the question of the persistence of individual things is only meaningful in a nature in which there are organic entities and the inorganic nature has been made into material for the organic. This point remains admittedly unclear in the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses*, but it would be sensible to read it as

895 SW X, 364. English: “But how is it that not every existent belonging to a particular level (the internalising) is annihilated again in progress, namely continued to a higher level – how is that explained: that it is not a manifold or sequence of stages, but a persistence? [...] These questions themselves already show that with the current views a higher and freer level of consideration is attained than with earlier ones.”

896 The relevant quote is too long to quote in full in the body of the text, hence I quote it here (from SW X, 365): “Wenn nun aber nicht von der individuellen Größe eines Körpers die Rede ist, sondern von dem Umfang, den er in der Schöpfung überhaupt einnimmt, so müssen wir nur gestehen, daß allerdings dieser Proceß nicht bloß von den Gegensätzen, durch die ein Concretes erzeugt wird, vermöge der es Subjekt-Objekt, in sich selbst also Subjekt und Objekt ist, daß er also auch nicht bloß von den beiden Ursachen abhängen kann, durch welche diese Zweiheit oder Dualismus in ihm gesetzt ist. Wir müssen uns erinnern, daß außer diesen beiden noch eine dritte Ursache ist, welche wir zum voraus als Finalursache bestimmt haben, daß zufolge dieser Ursache das Werden, welches wir Natur nennen, von Anfang einen Zweck hat und durch ihm selbst unbewußte Zwecke bestimmt ist. Zuzufolge dieser aufs Ende hinausgehenden Ansicht ist in dieser ganzen Stufenfolge des Werdens nur eine Reihe und Kette von Finalursachen, in der gleichsam für einen Moment jedes Werdende Zweck ist, aber nur um sogleich wieder als Mittel eines Höheren und gegen dieses als nicht seyend gesetzt zu werden. So, kann man sagen, war diese Mannichfaltigkeit, deren Werden wir bisher betrachtet haben, die Finalursache, der Zweck der Entstehung des Weltsystems, aber der Proceß dieser Mannichfaltigkeit, in welchem wir noch immer bloße Stufen der Ueberwindung oder Umwendung des B annehmen, hat selbst wieder einen Zweck, nämlich den Punkt der völligen Umwendung, mit dem, sowie er erreicht ist, nothwendig wieder eine andere und neue Welt gesetzt ist, die sich jetzt als Zweck darstellt. Es ist vorauszusehen, daß diese neue Welt die organische und vorzüglich die beseelte Natur seyn wird, der wir nun die, welche wir bis jetzt zu begreifen gesucht haben, als die unorganische und unbeseelte entgegenstellen.” English: Now if, however, we are not discussing the individual magnitude of a body but of the scope it assumes in creation at all, we must then confess that this process certainly cannot depend only on the juxtaposition through which something concrete is generated, in virtue of which it is subject-object and in itself therefore subject and object, that neither can it also depend solely on the two causes by which this duality or dualism is established in it. We must recall that outside of these two there is still a third cause, which we have defined in advance as the final cause, and that according to this cause the becoming we call nature has a goal from the beginning – a goal through which it is itself determined as an unconscious goal. In accordance with this view, opening towards the end, there is, in this entire sequence of stages of becoming, only one series and chain of final causes in which, as it were, each becoming is the goal for one moment, but only so that it directly and once again becomes the means towards a higher one in relation to which it is posited as not having being. So, we could say that the multiplicity, whose becoming we have so far considered, was the final cause, the goal of the emergence of the world-system, but the process of this multiplicity in which we still assume only stages in the overcoming or inversion of B had itself in turn a goal, namely the point of complete inversion with which, just as it is reached, another, new world is necessarily posited, which now presents itself as the goal. It is to be foreseen that this new world will be the organic and ensouled nature, which we have until now sought to conceive and now oppose to the inorganic and non-ensouled.”

follows: only when there are certain living beings who conceive the world is the concept of persistent individuation meaningful, since only for those living beings is the world divided into individuals. This means that for the inorganic matter in itself – the minerals, ions, electric charges – it is fully meaningless to ask if they persist in their individuation; this question is well-formulated only in case of organic matter. In this sense Schelling subscribes to a proto-functionalist view of individuation, where questions concerning it are solved also with regard to the questioner. It is somewhat unclear whether Schelling ultimately thinks that the question of individuation is only meaningful with respect to the human subject asking the question, but the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* presents human being as the “telos of organic creation” (“Endzweck der organischen Schöpfung”)⁸⁹⁷ and it is thoroughly possible that the question of individuation only asks after the “for-us” as opposed to the in-itself. Whether it was Schelling’s intention or not, the *Potenzenlehre* provides an opportunity to understand individuation functionally.

897 SW X, 377.

Conclusion

This work has undertaken an investigation of Schelling's late *Potenzenlehre*, primarily *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* and *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie*, with periodical excursions into other post-*Freiheitsschrift* Schelling texts when it was deemed necessary and enlightening. The main hypothesis this work aimed to explain and elaborate is that the potencies of Schelling's *Potenzenlehre* are to be read as functional units – as placeholders which can be occupied by anything whatsoever, thus producing a maximally versatile system which presents how determination happens in the universe. In light of this hypothesis, this work then sought to discuss, from as many angles and through as many issues as possible, the issue of determination in Schelling's *Potenzenlehre*, which is taken here to be, after Schelling's own intentions, a logical-ontological structure, expressing the process of becoming and determination. It is highly important to note that the *Potenzenlehre*, for lack of Schelling's explicit statement to that extent, can be read with a focus on either the ontology (i.e. as describing a structure of becoming) or epistemology (describing our understanding of the structure of becoming) or both – this work has not endeavoured to answer the question, instead preferring to treat the *Potenzenlehre* as a versatile philosophical tool. The starting point for the investigation lies in Kant's doctrine of the transcendental ideal, which Schelling criticises rather efficiently in his Berlin lectures of 1842. Schelling maintains that in order to talk about real things, things that have *being*, and the determinations of those things, philosophy itself needs to be anchored in being – an anchoring which Kant's *First Critique* intends to provide through the transcendental ideal, but which ultimately fails, as Kant cannot afford to ontologise this ideal. In other words – as chapter I demonstrates with reference to Wolfram Högrefe and Markus Gabriel, Kant postulates the transcendental ideal equivocally – on one hand, it is to be the sum of all determinations, itself an idea (i.e. of the same nature as a concept), and on the other hand, it is to be the ground of all determinations, extending beyond them and therefore non-conceptual. In other words, Kant is caught between an insufficient ideal and a really existing ideal his system cannot afford; Schelling seizes this Kantian dilemma and proceeds to argue that Kant's only exit from his dilemma is to ontologise the transcendental ideal – to posit it as actually existing. I fully agree with Markus Gabriel's reading of the Schellingian move in *Transcendental Ontology* – Schelling posits the transcendental ideal as unprethinkable being, a

term used, as it turns out, in a twofold manner. It is used to refer both to the fact of being's unprethinkability, i.e. the fact that being precedes thinking, as well as to simply being, with focus on unprethinkability. In light of these findings concerning late Schelling's stance on Kant and critique of the Kantian philosophy, it becomes possible to look at the *Potenzenlehre* as a structure of determination alternative to and supplementing Kant's principle of thoroughgoing determination.

The schema of the *Potenzenlehre* is, it turns out, something Schelling lets unfold in so many domains, that it becomes quite necessary to treat the potencies as placeholders – each stands in a certain relation to others, and there is a multitude of entities, processes and factors that can occupy each of the placeholders. Through a close reading of the *Darstellung des Naturprozesses* and *Darstellung der Reinrationalen Philosophie*, I have come to the conclusion that the potency structure is to be understood as follows. The first potency, usually designated as -A, is to play a role almost fully parallel to that of the Platonic *apeiron*: it is to underlie determination, to serve as matter for something else. That does not mean that it is to be fully passive, however – that which is to serve as matter to something else has previously been an existent in its own right, and so exerts some form of determination on the resulting product. This dual position of matter – that which passively underlies determination while at the same time exerting a measure of passive determination – is what leads Schelling to symbolise the first potency as -A/B, where B is matter as carrying passive determination. The second potency, +A plays the role of the determining factor to the determined -A; it exerts what I, in chapter II, have called “positive determination”. It is perhaps important to note that -A and +A do not exert determination on a final product by setting limits to one another. The third potency $\pm A$ is, then, the final product. I have, furthermore, argued that the existence of a second notation for symbolising the potencies in addition to this one in Schelling's writings should not be read as merely an arbitrary fact, but as significant for the *Potenzenlehre*: the second notation (A, A^2 , A^3) signifies the operation of the potencies at a further level, such that each of A, A^2 and A^3 are each composed of -A, +A and $\pm A$, the potency process constantly repeating itself with the product $\pm A$ becoming matter for determination for the next iteration of the potency activity and for the next product. This structure of determination was moreover examined as to its ontological status. It is not lost on me – and neither has it been lost on Schelling – that the presentation of the *Potenzenlehre* with the help of the notations Schelling develops is a formalism. This has led me to examine the status of the *Potenzenlehre*, arguing that they operate in the following manner: every time an investigation concerning the *Potenzenlehre* is to

be started, the starting point of the investigation is taken to be the provisional “origin”, the provisional first potency – this does not mean that the starting point in question is in any way primary besides for the purposes of the investigation. This is a manoeuvre which, I argue, Schelling uses already in the *Erster Entwurf*, and which is the most fruitful way to make sense of the profusion of domains Schelling applies the *Potenzenlehre* too. Moreover, the first levels and any starting points for investigations, including any “basic elements” or “fundamentality” are, due to the provisional nature of assigning the first potency, to be in turn investigated further. The potency chain, composed of fractally nested levels – a feature of Schelling’s potency structure he explores since the time of *Identitätsphilosophie* – is ungrounded in both directions, infinitely extending towards both the past and the future. The *Potenzenlehre* is, then, a structure of determination, where determination is operative in infinitely extending fractal chains.

In light of this first conclusion, I have then moved towards examining two important issues in Schelling’s late philosophy: the relation between the positive and the negative philosophies and the role God plays in determination. Regarding the first of those two questions: through a close reading of the *Philosophie der Offenbarung* lectures, I establish that there is considerable evidence to think that the *Potenzenlehre*, as principles of being, although discovered by negative philosophy, are also applicable to positive philosophy, which moreover, according to Schelling’s own remarks in the *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, is not limited to religion, but rather studies the historical unfolding of real being, and thus the revelation of God through history. Bracketing God for the time being, I argue in chapter IV that the difference between negative and positive philosophies is often exaggerated, and that with Schelling’s constant emphasis on how philosophy has to be unified and how there can only be one of it, the “two” philosophies are separated largely due to methodological-didactic reasons. Negative philosophy investigates the principles of being, which is an abstract conceptual endeavour, also ahistorical in character, while positive philosophy applies its principle to the historical unfolding of being and to actual production. Positive philosophy is, so to speak, “history plus” - it encompasses the history of something, along with its conceptual history (since it encompasses both conceptual determination and real production) and the forces behind the transformation of that something, the subject of history. Having discussed that, I move towards discussing the role of God in determination – although it is important to note here that chapter V only discusses God as to the narrow aspect of his involvement in the chains of *Potenzenlehre*. The main question I pose in chapter V, discussing God, is a very restricted one: to what extent is God related to the

Potenzenlehre chain as a whole and the way it unfolds? Through an examination of multiple texts from Schelling's later corpus, I arrive at the speculative conclusion that God is the ideal limit of the *Potenzlehre* chain, both at its beginning and its end. Although God is not part of the chain, the *Potenzenlehre* start with Him and they are headed towards the actualisation of all potencies, i.e. the state at which God, according to Schelling, will become fully revealed. Whether the world will reach that stage is a question Schelling does not speculate on extensively, but it seems that God does not play a role in determination immediately, but rather functions as an asymptote for the potency sequence.

With these answers out of the way, and having looked at an example of spatial and temporal determination unfolding through the *Potenzenlehre*, I turn to the question of how determination in the *Potenzenlehre* is different from but also influenced by determination in the *Identitätsphilosophie*, all to find out that *Identitätsphilosophie*, possibly developed in order to provide an account of individuation that does not undermine the individual as much as that of the *Naturphilosophie*, itself ends up undermining the individual, and is jettisoned in favour of a more dynamic view of individuation, one according to which not all determination is negation. At the end of this work, we are left with the following conclusion. The acceptance of a hypothesis according to which the potencies of the *Potenzenlehre* are functional placeholders has given us a coherent view of the *Potenzenlehre*, consistent with many nuances of Schelling's late texts. The potencies are principle of being, abstract, but applicable to historical unfolding. They are common to both positive and negative philosophies, and while there are mired in Schelling's religious outlook, God is not directly an influencing force in the *Potenzenlehre*. This work, hopefully, has shown the reader that the *Potenzenlehre* is a highly interesting, systematic and important part of classical German philosophy, and shown its remarkable place in Schelling's philosophical life as a natural development out of *Naturphilosophie* and *Identitätsphilosophie*, aiming to solve the perpetually-present Schellingian questions of determination and individuation.

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