Schelling's Treatise
on the Essence
of Human Freedom

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C. Interpretation of the Main Part of Schelling’s Treatise. Its Task: Metaphysics of Evil as the Foundation of a System of Freedom (pages 31-98).

The key question of the main investigation is the question of the inner possibility and of the kind of reality of evil. The intention of the investigation is to provide a full and live concept of human freedom. Thus the right center for the plan of the system of freedom is to be gained. And this system wants to answer the fundamental question of philosophy of the essence of Being in a sense which comprehends all impulses to thought.

A metaphysics of evil is the foundation of the question of Being as the ground of the system which is to be created as a system of freedom. Accordingly, a metaphysics as the foundation of metaphysics is sought for—a circular procedure. Granted, Kant already speaks of the metaphysics of metaphysics. For him, that is the Critique of Pure Reason; for Schelling, the metaphysics of evil. We can measure the distance from Schelling back to Kant and what went on meanwhile in German philosophy.

First of all, we want to get to know roughly the articulation of the main investigation. The titles which we give to characterize the individual sections are only signs of what is treated there. They neither exhaust the content nor do they catch hold of that basic movement of thinking which is started here by Schelling’s questions.

I. The inner possibility of evil.
II. The universal reality of evil as the possibility of individuals.
III. The process of the individuation of real evil.
IV. The form of evil appearing in man.
V. The justification of God’s divinity in the face of evil.
VI. Evil in the system as a whole.
VII. The highest unity of beings as a whole and human freedom.
I. THE INNER POSSIBILITY OF EVIL.

a) The Question of Evil and the Question of Being.

This first section begins the task immediately, but on the basis of the introduction. Thus everything remains strange and is difficult to follow if we have not mastered the introduction. This means, however, we should not only remember what is noted in the introduction and what the interpretation adds to this, but should also meanwhile have formed a readiness for a unique attitude of seeing and questioning. In this metaphysics of evil, we are to carry out the question of the essence of Being. Being has identity as its essence. Identity is unity as the belonging together of what is different. Yet the separation of what is different is not conceived as a difference, merely thought, empty in the sense of an empty logic that merely intends to make distinctions and which absents itself from everything, but as the occurrence of separating. This separation is always only the farewell to an earlier belonging to each other. The question of the essence of Being as the question of the possibility and reality of evil must follow this motion of increasing separation up to the highest bond. But this following is also not meant as mere “thought” following in imagination, but as a transformation of our real thinking and questioning. This transformation is intrinsically, and not just as a consequence, a returning to primordial fundamental mood. But moods in the essential sense do not come about by one’s talking about them, but only in action, here in the action of thinking. Action, too, cannot make the mood, but only summon it. Thus the old difficulty which man can never overcome returns, that only in the process can we gain that which must already be gained for this process. That means the first attempt of following along with the movement of Being demands of itself a repetition. This means that we stay in the motion of questioning. We complain much and loudly about the deadness and unreality of an “abstract” thinking. But we should only complain that we so little and so seldom find our way to the works which are nothing other than the hidden collection of inexhaustible forces with the release of which creative Dasein can alone be ignited. The greatness of a Dasein is first shown by the test whether it is capable of discovering and holding fast to the great resistance of its nature which towers above it. Why do we make this remark here? In order to point out that essential conditions exist for following the main investigation, that we must at least be prepared for the necessity of an essential returning to a great basic mood. To point that out, however, all of this should not come about for us as “sentimentalities”, but only in the hardness and simplicity of the questioning and real thinking which has cut itself loose from the puppet string of common “logic” in order to bind itself to a more primordial and thus stricter logic.

We are asking about the possibility of evil, how it is possible at all. This does not mean in what way it can come from somewhere else, but how it is intrinsically possible, what belongs to it and what belongs together in order for evil to be able
to be what it is, thus, inner possibility. But do we not have to know beforehand what evil is in order to decide how it is possible? Yes and no. Yes, we have to know it somehow beforehand; we must have a preconcept of it. This preconcept can take hold only when what is to be conceived has already been experienced. We must have a preconcept or at least he must have one who now wants to unfold the inner possibility of evil. But since the thinker relieves us of this in a forceful way and brings it about, it is at the same time true that we do not immediately need this preconcept. Rather, for us the evidence of the inner possibility of evil is nothing other than the attainment of the concept of evil. It is true that we can anticipate the concept of evil and looking ahead say in a free version: *Evil is the revolt that consists in inverting the ground of the essential will into the reverse of God's.* But so far this is merely an unclear statement, above all lacking the focused perspective from which its meaning is fulfilled. The anticipated delineation of the nature of evil shows at most that we are still very far removed from comprehending. We also cannot decide from this statement which way the revealing of the inner possibility of evil has to go. And it is precisely this way which is important if we want to reach the movement of questioning. Detours are always false ways here.

The first section, which is supposed to treat the inner possibility of evil, contains an essential division (p. 39, at the end of the paragraph, "and this constitutes the possibility of good and evil"). We want to get to know this first part (p. 31, "The philosophy of Nature of our time..." up to p. 39). It really contains everything and we may thus not expect to understand it completely at the first try. On the other hand, if our interpretation of the introduction has taken the right direction and has correctly distributed the weight of things, we must already be prepared for what is decisive. The intention of the interpretation was with explicating the ontological question and gathering all questions together with regard to the question of Being. Since this is never explicitly evident in Schelling, our procedure might seem one-sided. But we may reconcile ourselves to this one-sidedness, provided that it is the one-sidedness directed toward the *One* decisive thing. As with every actual interpretation of a work of thought, it is true here that it is not the opinion which a thinker ends up with that is decisive, nor the version in which he gives this opinion. Decisive is rather the movement of questioning that alone lets what is true come into the open.


The unspoken question, which is nevertheless also a motivating one, is the question of the essence and ground of Being. How does this become evident in the subsequent metaphysics of evil? In the new definition of the nature of human freedom put forth at first as an assertion, as "the faculty for good and evil," evil was explicitly mentioned. Accordingly, evil is a possible resolution of being free, a way of man's *being-free*. But according to the formal concept and within the tradition of the Idealistic interpretation of Being in which Schelling also, in spite
of everything, keeps his place, being free is the fundamental determination of the being-in-itself of beings in general. The inner possibility of evil can thus only be elucidated by going back to the question: What belongs to the determination of a self-contained being? (Compare answer to Eschenmayer, I, VII, p. 164 ff.)

Schelling does not ask this question explicitly at first, but, rather, the main investigation starts with an answer:

The Philosophy of Nature of our time first established the distinction in science between Being insofar as it exists, and Being insofar as it is the mere basis of existence. This distinction is as old as its first scientific presentation. As this very point at which the Philosophy of Nature departs from the path of Spinoza most decisively has been disregarded, it could be maintained in Germany up to the present time that the metaphysical principles of this philosophy were identical with those of Spinoza. And although it is this distinction which at the same time brings about the most definite distinction between nature and God, this did not prevent the accusation that it constituted a confusion of God with nature. As the present investigation is based on the same distinction, the following may be remarked for its explication (P. 31-32).

Briefly, Schelling says that in every “being” its existence and the ground of its existence must be distinguished. What do these terms mean: being, ground, existence?

“Being” (Wesen) is not meant here in the sense of the “essence” of a thing, but in the sense in which we speak of a “living being,” of “household affairs,” of “educational matters.” What is meant is the individual, self-contained being as a whole. In every being of this kind, we must distinguish its “ground” and its “existence.” This means that beings must be comprehended as existing and as ground-giving.

“Ground” always means for Schelling foundation, substratum, “basis,” thus not “ground” in the sense of “ratio,” not with the counterconcept “consequence” insofar as the ratio says why a statement is true or not true. “Ground” is for Schelling precisely the nonrational. On the other hand, however, we must avoid throwing this ground into the primeval swamp of the so-called irrational.

“Existence” does not really mean the manner of Being; but, rather, beings themselves in a certain regard—as existing; as we speak of a dubious “existence” and mean the existing person himself. Schelling uses the word existence in a sense which is closer to the literal etymological sense than the usual long prevalent meaning of “existing” as objective presence. Ex-sistence, what emerges from itself and in emerging reveals itself. From this explanation: “ground” as what forms the substratum, “existence” as what reveals itself, it can already be seen that this distinction by no means coincides with a current one in philosophy: that of essentia and existentia, “essence” and “existence,” what-ness and that-ness.

Thus, Schelling also remarks correctly that this distinction, ground and existence, was first discovered and established in his philosophy of nature, in a
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treatise bearing the title, Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie (1801). This
treatise is the first presentation of the system of identity, that step in metaphysics
which preserves the independence of nature and the selfhood of spirit to the last
degree and yet thinks both together in a higher unity.

A certain indefinite generality and arbitrariness in the usage of leading terms
often makes an understanding more difficult, not only of the system of identity,
but also of German Idealism in general at this stage. The opposition of nature
and Spirit is often understood as that of the real and the ideal. Here ideal means
determined by representation in the sense of the explicit I represent (intelligence);
real—what is thinglike. Or the same opposition in the formulation: Object-Subject.
And later after The Ages of the World.

Object-subject—subject-object.

Being—beings.

But the ontological fundamental principle of the system of identity is: “Every­
thing that is, is only insofar as it expresses absolute identity in a definite form of
Being” (I, IV, p. 133). Schelling calls the individual forms and stages of Being
“potencies.”

Although the distinction cited of the ground and existence of a being can be
found in the first presentation of his system, still it is not yet expressly worked out
and accordingly planned in its whole scope for the determination of beings. This
comes about only in the treatise on freedom. Subsequently, we shall call this
“distinction,” which according to Schelling constitutes the basic structure of self­
contained beings, the jointure of Being.

The main investigation begins with an interpretation of this distinction about
which it is explicitly noted that “the present investigation is based on it” (p. 32).
The difference between ground and existence concerns beings as such in two
different respects which, however, belong together. These determinations are thus
concerned with the Being of beings in a unified way. We already heard that the
primal nature of Being is will. Accordingly, the distinction cited must be con­
tained in the nature of will if it is to provide the essential determination of Being.
We must thus meet up with this distinction through a sufficiently primordial
analysis of the nature of will. Schelling himself, of course, does not follow this path
of essential analysis, neither here nor elsewhere in the treatise. Its task demands
another path. In accordance with the main intention of our interpretation, we
shall subsequently carry out such an analysis. Schelling, however, begins with an
“interpretation”; that is, he shows this difference in beings themselves, not in an
arbitrary being, but in that being which was always in view in the previous
reflections—beings as a whole, regarded according to their basic structure: God
and things in the broadest sense of what is dependent, of “what is created”
(“creatures”). Of course, this kind of demonstration cannot be similar to pointing
out the presence of an insect on grapevines. If we attempt such a demonstration
as a criterion for Schelling’s method—whether implicitly or explicitly—every-
thing will immediately seem to be arbitrary and lacking conviction. However, we must remember that neither God nor the totality of the world are “things” in the usual sense. We can never bring this being before us like individual “cases” by which we “demonstrate” a sickness or like individual “examples” of birds by which we can empirically illustrate the generic concept “birds.” The “interpretation” of the distinction of “ground and existence” with regard to God and creatures must have a different character. Schelling’s method is not as arbitrary as it seems at first. He clearly knows about his point of departure and his way. To what extent these are justified and how one can decide about this justification in general is another question.

Schelling begins by showing this distinction of ground and existence in God. Showing means here at the same time illuminating the sense in which it is meant. And this sense points toward the way in which what-is (God) is to be presented to knowledge. Schelling reminds us of a common definition of God’s nature as *causa sui*, cause of himself as existing, as ground of his existence. Thus, so it seems—the distinction is shown to be something common. But, says Schelling, ground is meant here only as a concept. Whoever speaks this way does not try at all to determine the factual nature of what they call ground. They completely neglect to say how this ground is ground. We can say that the kind of grounding remains indefinite. Taken in a quite empty sense, ground only means the whence of God’s existence and this whence, says the opinion of that definition of the whence, is precisely God himself. Schelling, however, wants to accomplish precisely this: to bring to a conceptual formulation how God comes to himself, how God—not as a concept thought, but as the life of life—comes to himself. Thus a becoming God!

Correct. If God is the existent being, then the most difficult and greatest becoming must be in Him and this becoming must have the most extreme scope between his whence and his whither. But at the same time, it is true that this whence of God, and also the whither, can again only *be in* God and *as* God himself: *Being!* But the determination of beings in the sense of the presence of something objectively present is no longer adequate at all to conceive this Being. Thus “existence” is understood beforehand as “emergence-from-self” revealing oneself and in becoming revealed to oneself coming to oneself, and because of this occurrence “being” with itself and thus in itself, “being” itself. God as existence, that is, the existing god is this god who is *in himself* historical. For Schelling, existence always means a being insofar as it is aware of itself (*bei sich selbst*). Only that, however, can be aware of itself which has gone out of itself and in a certain way is always outside of itself. Only what has gone out of itself and what takes upon itself being outside of itself and is thus a being aware of itself has, so to speak, “absolved” the inner history of its Being and is accordingly “absolute.” God as the existing one is the absolute God, or God as he himself—in brief: God-himself. God considered as the ground of his existence “is” not yet God truly as he himself. But, still, God “is” his ground. It is true that the ground is something distinguished
from God, but yet not ‘outside of’ God. The ground in God is that in God which God himself ‘is’ not truly himself, but is rather his ground for his selfhood. Schelling calls this ground ‘nature’ in God.

Now the decisive sentence with which Schelling begins may have been clarified: ‘As there is nothing before or outside of God, he must contain within himself the ground of his existence. All philosophies say this, but they speak of this ground as a mere concept without making it something real and actual. This ground of his existence, which God contains (within himself), is not God viewed as absolute, that is insofar as he exists. For it is only the basis of his existence, it is nature—in God, inseparable from him, to be sure, but nevertheless distinguishable from him’ (p. 32).

We can already see here how identity now becomes clarified and deepened as belonging together in the sense of the merging of what has separated in a higher unity. Ground and existence are not two constituents out of which the ‘thing,’ called God, is put together. Rather, ground and existence are the key terms for the essential laws of becoming of God’s becoming in his Being as God. Therefore, the common expression for this Being, the ‘is,’ must always be understood dialectically.”

For the sake of the importance of this section, let us briefly present the decisive thoughts once more. We began to interpret the first section of the main investigation of the treatise on freedom. It is the gateway. If we succeed in going through it, everything else will open up of its own accord.

We understand the main treatise as a metaphysics of evil with a metaphysical intention. The supplement means the question of the nature and reality of evil lays the ground for the question of Being in general. It lays the ground by forcing one to lay the previous ground more deeply. How far Schelling and German Idealism in general had and could have a clear knowledge of this procedure of metaphysics is a subordinate question now.

But the question of evil enters the decisive context of questioning of the treatise on freedom because the nature of human freedom is conceived as the faculty of good and of evil. Evil is a way of man’s being free. Schelling wants to understand evil in the system of freedom. He does not, however, want a system of the self-laceration of reason. He thus wants to save the system after all, too, first the system and then the fitting concept of evil which is compatible with it.

But in this way what is distinctive about Schelling’s position as a thinker would not be captured. For Schelling does not think ‘concepts’; he thinks forces and thinks from positions of the will. He thinks from the strife of powers which cannot be made to subside by a technique of concepts. Accordingly, the metaphysical theology carried out here also lies completely outside a formal analysis of the determinations of a dogmatic concept of God.

The first section is supposed to show the inner possibility of evil, that is, those conditions which make evil what it essentially is. The task is clear and the
procedure seems simple. Schelling himself gives it an external presentation which

gives this appearance. And at first we shall follow this external appearance.

Thus, the course is as follows:

Evil—if it is not absolutely nothing—must be a being. But what belongs to a
being? Answer: a ground and an existence. This jointure of Being is to be
"elucidated," and then the clarified concept is to be "applied" to the question of
the nature of evil.

The reflection actually begins by stating the difference.

Ground: What gives ground, foundation. Thus ground not in the sense of the
logical ground which has as its counterconcept the logical consequence.

Existence: The existing, in the meaning of emergence from self, of revealing
oneself. In existence and as existence, a being comes to itself. Existing, a being is
itself what it is. To be a self means in the idealistic interpretation to be "I," I as
subject. Thus, Schelling also always means by existence the "subject" of exist­
ence. (I,VIII,p.164).

When we consider this, it is easy to see how a complete transformation has
taken place since the Greek way of thinking. Hypokeimenon is what underlies, the
foundation, the ground in Schelling's sense. The Latin translation for this is
subjectum. But this subjectum becomes the I after Descartes so that Schelling now is
in the position of opposing the hypokeimenon to the subjectum.

This distinction, however, is not a simple one, but an "identical" one. Each is in
itself related to the other.

This is true of all the leading distinctions which the philosophy of identity
incorporated within itself:

nature—Spirit
non-I—I
real—ideal
object—subject
Being—a being
thing—reason
"ground"—"existence"

The interpretation of the distinction:

First consideration: for a long time God has been called causa sui. The highest
being must take upon himself the most weighty and great becoming, must in
himself be the historical god.

The ground in God and God himself are separated and, as separated, belong to
each other.

The ground in God is that which God as himself is not and which still is not outside of
him.

The "is" must be understood "dialectically."

Now and in what follows, we have continually the opportunity to understand
the "is" in the sense of identity correctly conceived. "It" (the ground) "is" nature
in God. "Is" does not simply mean has the quality and the role. Rather, "Is" with a capital letter means that God as the ground takes it upon himself to presence (wesen) in the way of nature and to help constitute the Being of God. "It (the ground) is nature in God" and again on the next page, "but God is also prior to the ground."

Schelling says (on the same page): "And nature in general is therefore everything that lies beyond the absolute Being of absolute identity."

"Nature" now does not yet mean what we alone experience immediately as "nature," but signifies a metaphysical determination of beings in general and means what belongs to beings as their foundation, but is that which does not really enter the being of the self. Rather, it always remains what is distinguished from the self.

But when we now follow the instruction that the "is" is always to be thought dialectically, still the difficulties do not disappear in which the first elucidation of the jointure of Being stands. It is accomplished by returning to God. Here something is to be made clear by a reference to something which is obscure and the most obscure of all with regard to its nature and existence. We resist such an elucidation, especially when still another strange thing is connected with the return from the ontological to the theological. That in terms of which the difference (ground and existence) is to be understood as clarified is at the same time to be thought in a way still strange to common sense. We are not just required to return to God, we must rather think God still more primordially.

A remarkable interpretation of elucidation, yes indeed. And we must therefore first think through the difficulties which turn up in order to get to what really stands behind the appearance of a procedure of elucidation.

c.) The Becoming of God and Creatures. Temporality, Movement, and Being.

The Being of God is a becoming to himself out of himself. Ordinary thinking immediately finds here two seemingly insurmountable difficulties.

(1) A becoming God is no God at all, but something finite and (2) if God becomes out of his ground and first posits this ground itself as such insofar as he has distinguished himself from it, what is produced here is at the same time made into that which is in its turn first produced by what it itself was produced from. That is a "circle" in all possible respects. But for thought a circle is a contradiction, and contradiction is the destruction of all thinkability. Both difficulties have their root in a one-sided thinking which is unable to combine what is different and separated.

According to its formal concept, "becoming" is the transition from not-yet-being to being. Since a not occurs here, a lack and thus a finitude can be ascertained in becoming. Formally, without looking at the matter, that is correct (Compare I, VII, p. 403/4). But one forgets to ask whether this "not," that is,
the not-yet-existing of the ground, does not ultimately and positively precisely make existence possible, whether the not-yet “is” not for itself just that from which precisely what emerges from itself comes. One forgets to notice that in this becoming what becomes is already in the ground as the ground. Becoming is neither a mere relinquishing of the ground nor an annihilation of it, but on the contrary, what exists first lets the ground be its ground. This becoming is not the mere the precursor of Being which is put aside afterward as, for example, in the case of the becoming of a shoe where the procedure of making it remains outside of the finished product, and the finished product becomes finished by being removed from the realm of procedure. On the contrary, in the case of the non-thing-like becoming of God, becoming as the development of essential fullness is included in Being as its essential constituent.

We are accustomed not only to “measure” every process and all becoming guided by time, but to follow it this way in general. But the becoming of the God as ground to the God himself as existing cannot be represented as “temporal” in the everyday sense. Thus, one is accustomed to attribute eternity to the Being of God. But what does “eternity” mean and how is it to be comprehended in a concept? God’s becoming cannot be serialized in individual segments in the succession of ordinary “time.” Rather, in this becoming everything “is” “simultaneous.” But simultaneous does not mean here that past and future give up their nature and turn “into” the pure present. On the contrary, original simultaneity consists in the fact that being past and being present assert themselves and mingle with each other together with being present as the essential fullness of time itself. And this mingling of true temporality, this Moment, “is” the essence of eternity, but not the present which has merely stopped and remains that way, the nunc stans. Eternity can only be thought truly, that is, poetically, if we understand it as the most primordial temporality, but never in the manner of common sense which says to itself: Eternity, that is the opposite of temporality. Thus, in order to understand eternity, all time must be abstracted in thought. What remains in this procedure is not, however, a concept of eternity, but simply a misunderstood and half-baked concept of an illusory time.

The becoming of the God as the eternal is a contradiction for common sense. That is quite as it should be, for this contradiction characterizes the prevailing of a more primordial Being in which the earlier and the later of clock time has no meaning. What precedes, the ground, does not already have to be what is superior and higher and, conversely, what is superior can very well be what “follows.” What is earlier in essence is not necessarily what is superior in essence and what is superior does not become lower by being something later. The “priority” of the one and the “superiority” of the other do not exclude each other here because there is no last and no first here, since everything is at once. But this “at once” is not to be understood as the contraction of the succession of ordinary time into a “now” magnified to giant proportions, but as the sole uniqueness of
the inexhaustible fullness of temporality itself. "Ground and existence" are to be conceived in the unity of this primordial movement. This unity of their circling is what is primordial. But we must not take the two determinations out of this circle, immobilize them and set what is thus immobilized against each other in a seemingly "logical" thinking. Here a contradiction undeniably appears. But the origin of this contradiction is still more questionable than its appearance.

The ground is in itself what supports what emerges and binds it to itself. But as emergence from itself existence is what grounds itself on its ground and founds it explicitly as its ground.

Ground and existence belong together. This belonging together first makes their separation and the discord possible which builds up into a higher unity. Thus two dimensions emerge in the essence of "essence," in the constitution of the Being of beings indicated by ground and existence. First that of the primordial temporality of becoming and then, within this, the necessarily posited dimension of self-increasing, respectively falling beneath, self. These movements belong to the inner flow of the essence of Being if we avoid from the outset making the objective presence or the handiness of things the first and sole criterion of the determination of Being. We are protected from this nearly indestructible inclination only if we question this way of being a thing at the right time and dismiss it in its peculiarity.

But in the perspective of this essential connection of ground and existence, the essential possibility of evil, and thus the outline of its ontological constitution, is to be sought. And only in terms of this constitution does it become intelligible why and how evil is grounded in God, and how God is yet not the "cause" of evil. (Compare I, VII, pp. 375 and 399). Schelling states (p. 33): "God contains himself in an inner basis of his existence, which, to this extent, precedes him as to his existence, but similarly God is prior to the basis, as this basis, as such, could not be if God did not exist in actuality."

In the middle part of this paragraph, Schelling clarifies a correspondence to the determinations ground and existence and their reciprocal relationship.

"By analogy, this relationship can be explicated by referring to the relation of gravitation and light in nature. . . ." "Gravity" corresponds to the ground, "light" to existence. Gravity and light belong to the realm of "nature." But precisely for Schelling gravity and light and their relation to each other are not just an image, but gravity and light "are" in their relation of Being and essence within created nature only a certain expression of the essential jointure in Being itself, the jointure: ground-existence. Gravity is what burdens and pulls, contracts and in this connection what withdraws and flees. But light is always the "clearing," what opens and spreads, what develops. What is light is always the clearing of what is intertwined and entangled, what is veiled and obscure. Thus, what is to be illuminated precedes light as its ground from which it emerges in order to be itself light. When Schelling calls the reference to the relation of gravity
and light an "analogical" explanation, this does not mean that it is only a pictorial image. Rather, he means a justified comparison of the one stage of Being with the other, both identical in the essence of Being and different only in potency.

We know that darkness and light, night and day, have always appeared as essential powers in man's reflection on beings, not just as "images." We know especially that "light" as the condition of seeing in our access to things has become determinative for the interpretation of cognition and knowledge in general. The lumen naturale, the natural light of reason, is that brightness in which beings stand for man, in keeping with his nature. Finally, we know that in the last decades of the eighteenth century, in the transition to the nineteenth century, the investigation of nature moved to a more primordial ground and new insights were made in which the fundamental appearances of gravity and light played a special role. However, today we no longer have the eyes to reproduce this insight into nature. This questioning of nature is called "romantic philosophy of nature" and is used with the following in mind: all of that is really nonsense. Really, that is, in the light of all the things that contemporary physics and chemistry can do. They can do a great deal and one should avoid minimizing things here. But all the more clearly should the limitations be seen. What today's physics and chemistry, what modern science, cannot do at all, can never do as such, is to take the perspective, or even provide it, for deciding the question whether that "romantic philosophy of nature" is nonsense or not. That is itself still a question, but we do not want to go into it now. But let us warn against dismissing the perspectives of the philosophy of nature as impossible viewed from the illusory superiority of technological possibilities of change and against falsifying the essential conditions of things into mere "poetic images." And if everything is supposed to be only "images," then the poetic language of imagery in today's exact science exists no less than before. Rather, it is at best only coarser, more rigid, and more accidental. It would be just as fatal if one wanted to jump head over heels into an earlier philosophy of nature, for which we lack the existential and conceptual basic positions today, or if one wanted to insist upon the present form of science as being something timeless.

A transformation, which is necessary, can only occur when what rules us is transformed of its own accord. For this, one must oneself first of all rule what rules us, that is, stand in the middle of it and at the same time beyond it. That is the nature of transition. Ages of transition are the historically decisive ones.

The first elucidation of the distinction of ground and existence in a being, that is, with regard to God's nature, is "supplemented" by a second observation with regard to things.

"A consideration which proceeds from things leads to the same distinction" (p. 33ff.).

But we must consider right away that things as existing are somehow in God, that this being-in-God, however, is determined again and precisely from the nature of the divine Being in that it is God who is everything. The elucidation of
the distinction ground-existence "which proceeds from things" must not be understood as if things could be considered for themselves, and thus show this jointure of Being in them. Rather, to consider things in their being means precisely to question them in their relation to God. For this reason this second "elucidation" steers us back to the same realm; but of course now in such a way that, in keeping with the matter, the "elucidation" of the jointure of Being goes unexpectedly from things over to a presentation of the becoming of things from God, briefly to a metaphysical project of the process of creation.

Here, too, and perhaps here most of all, we are just as inclined to fall prey to thoughts easily oppressing us. And we must not avoid them at all. Rather, everything must be concentrated on one main doubt about Schelling’s whole procedure. Before we follow the second elucidation of the jointure of Being, we must gain clarity about this. What is merely "new" is in itself just as open to criticism as what is merely "old."

We would do well to understand again here beforehand the direction of Schelling’s thinking. We know from the “introduction” that the question of the relation of things to God goes under the title of “pantheism,” and that the formal concept of pan-theism was determined so far by the idea of "immanence." Occasionally, the criticism of Spinoza did show that his error consisted in understanding what was posited as existing in God as a thing, as thinglike. Here thing means beings of the species of dead, material bodies. But we may go on speaking of things' being-in-God if we just do not determine the thingness of the thing exclusively and primarily in terms of those material things.

But even when we understand the thingness of things in the sense of a “higher realism,” the doctrine of immanence still has the difficulty which leads to what Schelling now undertakes—"to set aside completely the concept of immanence." Why? In the concept of “manence” (manere), of remaining, the idea of mere objective presence, of rigid presence, is contained if no other determination is added to transform it. "Immanence" thus leads to the idea of “things being lifelessly contained in God,” just as the skirt hangs in the closet. Rather, the only concept appropriate to the being of things is that of “becoming.” This obviously of necessity results from what was said about God's nature. There we also spoke of a "becoming." If things have their being in God and are in this sense godlike, their being, too, can only be understood as becoming. But the nature of things, which is not identical with God, but different from him, and as different from him, the infinite, is necessarily different in an infinite way—their being cannot consist in that becoming as eternity. Things cannot become in God since God the existing one is purely He himself. They are godlike, and can only become "in" God if they become in that which in God himself is not He himself. And that is the ground in God. This ground in God has now undergone a new determination through this reflection. It is that in which things are, emerging from it.

How is this to be understood? To understand this, we must think God's nature
clearly, God, insofar as he is not He himself, that is, God, insofar as he is the ground of himself, God as the truly originating God who is still completely in his ground, the God as he has not yet emerged from himself to himself. This not-yet of the ground does not disappear after God has become the existing one, and it is not cast off as a mere no-longer. Rather, since it is an eternal becoming, the not-yet remains. There remains in God the eternal past of himself in his ground. The “afterwards” and “soon” are to be understood here in an eternal sense. The whole boldness of Schelling’s thinking comes into play here. But it is not the vacuous play of thoughts of a manic hermit, it is only the continuation of an attitude of thinking which begins with Meister Eckhart and is uniquely developed in Jacob Boehme. But when this historical context is cited, one is immediately ready again with jargon, one speaks of “mysticism” and “theosophy.” Certainly, one can call it that, but nothing is said by that with regard to the spiritual occurrence and the true creation of thought, no more than when we quite correctly ascertain about a Greek statue of a god that is a piece of marble—and everything else is what a few people have imagined about it and fabricated as mysteries.

Schelling is no “mystic” in the sense of the word meant in this case, this is, a muddlehead who likes to reel in the obscure and finds his pleasure in veils.

Schelling is also quite clear in the presentation of the originating God in his eternal past about how he must proceed here and can only proceed. We must, says Schelling, bring this being, the ground in God, “humanly closer to us.”

But with this, Schelling only expresses what we have probably already had on the tip of our tongue for a long time with regard to the procedure of thought accomplished here: this whole project of divine Being and Being in general is accomplished by man. God is only the elevated form of man. The morphe of the anthropos is transformed, and what is transformed is asserted to be something else. In scholarly terms, this procedure is called “anthropomorphism.” One doesn’t need much acumen to find such “anthropomorphism” constantly in Schelling’s main treatise. And where there is something like this, and so concrete, the judgment is already a finished one. Such a humanization of the God and of things in general, one says, is after all the opposite of true, “objective” cognition and thus valueless. It leads strict and exact thinking astray in a way perhaps full of feeling, but for that reason all the more dangerous, and it must be rejected. These complaints against “anthropomorphism” look very “critical” and lay claim to the superiority and decisiveness of a purely objective and well-informed judgment. But once a kind of thought is suspected of an uncritical and unobjective anthropomorphism, it is often difficult to take it seriously in its full weight. It cannot surprise us that such a suspicion was immediately placed upon Schelling’s treatise too.

Nevertheless, we shall now try first of all at least to get acquainted with the rest of Schelling’s reflection. For only then do we have sufficient knowledge of what the main reservation of anthropomorphism is directed against. We shall for the time
being leave the suspicion of anthropomorphism in the treatise alone and attempt to comprehend the procedure in the first section as a whole.

d.) The Jointure of Being in God.

So far we have kept to Schelling's own external form of presentation: the elucidation of the structure of Being in two aspects: God and things. But let us not forget that in truth we are concerned with showing the inner possibility of evil. That distinction is completely in the service of this task. What Schelling calls an "elucidation" of this distinction itself already shows the inner possibility of evil. Thus, the distinction is by no means merely an external conceptual tool with whose help that demonstration is then brought about. Rather, the inner possibility of evil is grounded in the jointure of Being. The demonstration of how evil is rendered possible according to its inner possibility therefore becomes the task of showing how the conditions of the possibility of evil are created precisely by the fact that this jointure of Being is present in the nature of beings. It is surely not a matter of chance that the external form, and the inner development of just this first fundamental main section, remained very imperfect for here the most difficult task of all must be mastered. What was treated up to now in the external form of a first elucidation of the jointure of Being is still relatively easy to fathom—at least as far as its construction goes. The real difficulties begin—quite apart from the reservations about anthropomorphism—with respect to the construction and course now.

In order to get on here, let us free ourselves from the form of external presentation and attempt to place ourselves within the inner course of reflection. This can succeed only if we have the goal in mind and survey from that point whatever is necessary to attain it. Let us, therefore, now try to lay bare the core content of the whole first section according to these viewpoints. Then we shall pursue the movement in detail.

The task is to show the conditions of the inner possibility of evil. This showing projects and constructs the essential structure of evil guided in a peculiar way. According to its general concept and the assertions about it, evil is for us a possible gestalt of man's freedom. When it truly is, evil is thus in man, more precisely, is as human being. Therefore, the question is: How is this possibility of human being possible? And behind this question lies: How is man possible as the one who he is? But man is supposed to be the culmination and resting place of creation (I, VIII, p. 368/9). Thus, behind the question of the possibility of man lies the question of the possibility of this creature and thus of a creature in general. But behind the question of the possibility of what is created lies the question of the possibility of creation, and that is at the same time the question of its necessity, which can only be a freedom. Creation is a self-revelation of the god. And it is important in this context to avoid the idea of production which all too
easily obtrudes itself. According to what we said before, however, the self-revelation of God concerns the nature and Being of God as the existing one. This nature of God’s can only be shown by way of the nature of Being in general by returning to the jointure of Being and the essential lawfulness according to which in that jointure of Being, a being is structured as a being. God is truly himself as the Existent, that is, as He who emerges from himself and reveals himself. In that God, as He himself is, is with himself and purely from himself, he is the pure will. He is Spirit, for the Spirit in Spirit is the will, and the will in will is understanding. But understanding is the faculty of rule, of law, of ruling, binding unity in the sense of the unification of what is different belonging together. This articulating unity shines through what is confused and obscure. Understanding is the faculty of clearing. The pure will of the pure understanding is what primordially wills itself, Spirit. God as Spirit is as the existing one who, as Spirit, emerges from itself.

Now every being, however, can only be revealed in its opposite (I, VII, p. 373). There must be an other for him which is not God as He is himself and which yet includes the possibility of revealing himself in it. Thus, there must be something which, although it originates from the inmost center of the God and is Spirit in its way, yet still remains separated from him in everything and is something individual. But this being is man. Man must be in order for the God to be revealed. What is a God without man? The absolute form of absolute monotony. What is a man without God? Pure madness in the form of the harmless. Man must be in order for the God to “exist.” Fundamentally and generally expressed, this means that certain conditions commensurate with the nature of Being and the nature of God must be fulfilled to make God possible as the existing Spirit, that is, to make man possible. But then this means that the conditions of the possibility of the revelation of the existing God are at the same time the conditions of the possibility of the faculty for good and evil, that is, of that freedom in which and as which man has his being. To demonstrate the possibility of evil means to show how man must be, and what it means that man is. After all this it becomes clear that the ground of evil is nothing less than the ground of being human. But this ground must be in God’s innermost center. The ground of evil is thus something positive in the highest sense. Thus, evil itself cannot be something negative. Still more, it will not be sufficient just to emphasize some positive element in evil, too, and to understand it, for example, as the finite in opposition to the infinite. Finitude by itself is not yet evil; at any rate, not if we comprehend finitude as mere limitedness, as a mere no-further and stopping somewhere, corresponding to the limitedness of a material thing taken by itself. The principle of evil must be sought in a higher realm, in the spiritual realm. For evil itself is spiritual, yes, “in a certain regard the most pure spiritual thing, for it wages the most violent war against all Being, yes, it would like to incorporate the ground of creation” (Stuttg. Privatvorlesung 1810; I, VII, p. 468).
In our judgment of evil, we are either too hasty and superficial or too comfortable in that each time we take it to be merely a lack, in any case, at best as what is merely desolate, confused, coarse, and ugly, as when we all too easily misinterpret and underestimate an error as a lack of truth. However, error is not a lack of intelligence, but twisted intelligence. Thus, error can be highly ingenious and still be an error. Schelling once said:

Whoever is even somewhat familiar with the mysteries of evil (for one must ignore it with one’s heart, but not with one’s head) knows that the highest corruption is precisely the most intelligent, that in it everything natural and thus even sensuousness, even lust itself finally disappears, that lust turns into cruelty and that demonic-diabolical evil is much further removed from pleasure than is the good. If, therefore, error and malice are both spiritual and come from the Spirit, it is impossible that Spirit be the highest thing. (Ibid. I, VII, p. 468)

Only if we take such a high perspective of questioning and understand the nature of evil—malice—as Spirit, do we have sufficient scope for the task of following the inner possibility of evil to its innermost realm of conditions.

We showed that a quite definite echelon of questions lies in this question which leads back to the jointure of Being starting from the possibility of evil. The demonstration of what makes the possibility of evil possible must thus allow this possibility to originate, conversely, starting from the jointure of Being. We shall now pursue more closely Schelling’s manner of sketching this origin in an essential project. From what has now been said in preparation, it becomes clear that at bottom we can no more speak at all about a mere “elucidation” of the distinction of ground and existence guided by a consideration of created things. On the contrary, it is a matter of the “elucidation” (Erläuterung), making clear and bright, of the origin of evil with the help of the jointure of Being by going back to its essential lawfulness.

But this is not enough. We know that evil is a possibility of human freedom. Thus, the nature of human freedom must emerge in the clarification of the origin of the inner possibility of evil. In relation to what we have discussed up to now, this means that it must become evident how the various concepts of freedom now come into play and are transformed. In the course of our interpretation of the introduction, we have named six different concepts of freedom, apart from the concept of freedom now dominant. These concepts are not simply removed by the one set forth now. Rather, what they capture, but think one-sidedly and exaggeratedly, is now put within its limits and in its place. Only from the perspective of the truly metaphysical concept of freedom will we gain a view into the inner connection of what those concepts mean individually when only enumerated. Then there will no longer be six different concepts, but they will become one single jointure of human freedom active within itself. We shall now follow the essential steps of the first section.
It is important to remain closer to the text again now without claiming to clarify everything in a final way. But because the success of a true understanding depends above all on our actualizing the movement of the project, let us now once again—in brief statements—place the task before us.

As the essential possibility of human freedom, evil is an essential manner of human freedom. As the spirit separated from God and thus idiosyncratic, man is that being in which God reveals himself as eternal Spirit. This self-revelation of God in man is in itself at the same time the creation of man. But self-revelation belongs to the nature of God as the existing one. Existence is the primordial and essential self-revelation of God in himself before the eternal act of creating things. But existence is intrinsically related to that in God from which he emerges as existent, to the ground in God. Thus existence, self-revelation in general and the creation of the world in particular and thus human beings and thus the possibility of evil have their essential beginning, their “principle,” in the nature of the ground.

Therefore, the reflection on the origin must begin with an essential project of the nature of this ground in God—all of this, however, in anticipation of the becoming of creation. The entire reflection on the origin is, however, carried out in the light of a concept of Being which has abandoned that decisive orientation toward the mere bodily presence of material things.

A consideration which proceeds from things leads to the same distinction. First, the concept of immanence is to be set aside completely insofar as it is meant to express a dead conceptual inclusion of things in God. We recognize, rather, that the concept of becoming is the only one adequate to the nature of things. But the process of their becoming cannot be in God, viewed absolutely, since they are distinct from him toto genere or—more accurately—in eternity. To be separate from God they would have to carry on this becoming on a basis different from Him. But since there can be nothing outside God, the contradiction can only be solved by things having their basis in that within God which is not God himself (footnote: this is the only correct dualism, namely a dualism which at the same time admits a unity. We mentioned above a modified dualism according to which the principle of evil does not stand alongside goodness, but is subordinated to it. It is hardly to be feared that anyone will confuse the relationship established here with that dualism in which the subordinate is always an essentially evil principle and for this very reason remains incomprehensible with respect to its origin in God.), that is, in that which is the basis of His existence. If we wish to bring this Being nearer to us from a human standpoint, we may say it is the longing which the eternal One feels to give birth to itself. This is not the One itself, but is coeternal with it. This longing seeks to give birth to God, that is, the unfathomable unity, but to this extent it has not yet the unity in its own self. Therefore, regarded in itself, it is also will: but a will within which there is no understanding and thus not an independent and complete will, since understanding is actually the will in willing. Nevertheless, it is a will of the understanding, namely, the longing and desire thereof; not a conscious but a prescient will, whose prescience is understanding. We are speaking of the essence of longing
regarded in and for itself, which we must view clearly, although it was long ago submerged by the higher principle which had risen from it, and although we cannot grasp it perceptively but only spiritually, that is, with our thoughts. (PP. 33-34)

Now a part follows that does not belong directly to the train of thought and in any case is considerably disturbing if what is essential has not already been grasped. We shall leave this part (p. 34), “Following the eternal act of self-revelation . . . grow clear thoughts” (p. 35), aside for now and take up the end of the main train of thought with the following sentence: “We must imagine the primal longing in this way—turning towards the understanding, indeed, though not yet recognizing it, just as we longingly desire unknown, nameless excellence. This primal longing moves in anticipation like a surging, billowing sea, similar to the ‘matter’ of Plato, following some dark, uncertain law, incapable in itself of forming anything that can endure.”

The task of this part is the characterization of the nature of the ground in God as “longing.” We have already shown how in general positing of the jointure of Being in God takes His nature away from the misinterpretation of this being in the sense of some gigantic, objectively present thing. The nature of being God is a becoming. By going back to the ground of this becoming, Schelling means something which is in God as that which is determined both by ground and existence in an equally primordial way. Schelling’s presentation gives the appearance that God exists first only as ground. But God is always that which is determined by ground and existence, the “primal being” which as such is its nature—before any ground and before any existence, thus before any duality at all. Schelling calls it (p. 87) the “primal ground or, rather, the groundless,” “absolute indifference,” about which no difference, not even the jointure of Being, can be really predicated adequately. The sole predicate of the Absolute is the “lack of predicates,” which still does not turn the Absolute into nothing.

But as soon as we speak of the ground in God, we do not, however, mean a “piece” of God to which the existing God belongs as the producer and counterpart. Rather, God’s being a ground is a way of the eternal becoming of God as a whole. And this becoming does not have its beginning in the ground, but just as primordially in existing, that is, it is a becoming without beginning. But because the nature of being God is this becoming, the being of things can only also be understood as becoming, since nothing which is can be thought as being absolutely outside of God.

The treatise begins by explicitly pointing out that the “nature” of things is to be understood as becoming. This anticipates that whose possibility is to be shown. But with this, the concept of thing changes, too. The thinghood of things consists in revealing the nature of God. To be a thing means to present God’s Being, which is an eternal becoming, itself as a becoming. Things refer through themselves to primordial Being. And this referring-through-themselves is not an act which they
perform on top of being things, but being a thing is this referring-through-itself, this transparency. The way a thinker sees "things" depends upon how primordially he comprehends the nature of Being. Conversely, it is true that how primordially he views the nature of Being also depends upon the fundamental experience of things guiding him. The understanding of the thinghood of things in the sense of the referring-through-itself of the primal being permits us now to call man a thing, too, without the danger of misinterpreting his nature from the very beginning.

This interpretation of thinghood, however, is also a presupposition for correctly understanding what Schelling is trying to say in the statement that the being of things is a becoming. He does not mean that platitude that all things are continuously changing. Nor does he mean that external ascertainment that there is nowhere at all in the world a state of rest and things really do not have being. Rather, the statement means that things, of course, are, but the nature of their being consists in actually presenting a stage and a way in which the Absolute is anchored and presented. Being is not dissolved into an external flowing away called becoming; becoming is rather understood as a way of Being. But Being is now understood primordially as will. Beings are in being according to the joining of the factors "ground and existence" belonging to the jointure of Being in a willing being.

To say that the being of things is a becoming means that existing things strive for a definite stage of willing. The indifferent uniformity of a purely static multiplicity does not exist in their realm. Becoming is a manner of preserving Being, serviceable to Being, not the simple opposite of Being as it might easily appear if Being and becoming are only distinguished in formal respects and Being is understood as objective presence. (Without really taking hold of the problem, Schelling comes near the true, metaphysical relations between Being and becoming here which have always easily withdrawn from the thinker's view because he gets lost in the formal conceptual relations of both ideas. Nietzsche, too, never got out of the network of formal dialectic at this point.) Now we have a definite perspective on the metaphysical connection of Being between God and things.

The Being of the existing God is becoming in the primordial simultaneity of absolute temporality, called eternity. The being of things is a becoming as a definite emergence of divine Being into the revealedness of opposites still concealing themselves. The thinghood of things is so little determined by an indifferent objective presence of material bodies that matter itself is conceived as Spirit. What "we" feel and see as matter is Spirit which has congealed into the extended gravity of inertia.

But Schelling grasps the metaphysical connection of Being between God and things themselves in the following two statements (pp. 33): "To be separate from God they would have to carry on this becoming on a basis different from him. But since there can be nothing outside God, this contradiction can only be solved by
things having their basis in that within God which is not God himself, that is, in that which is the basis of his existence.”

The being of things is a being separated from God as absolute becoming. The being of things is thus itself a becoming. This becoming must thus be grounded, on the one hand, in a ground which is different from God and at the same time a ground which is active in God. How is this ground to be understood which grounds the separation of things from God as their inwardness in God?

Starting with this question, a metaphysical perspective on the leading question of the inner possibility of evil is now easily attained. We can characterize it by the following three questions:

1. How can something which is separated from God still be divine?
2. How is evil possible in the realm of this being?
3. How can it as a being be grounded in God without being caused by God?

The investigation must start with the ground which is different from God Himself, but active in God. Obviously, we must grasp this ground in two respects—which belong together. On the one hand, with regard to how God’s becoming from Himself to Himself occurs in that ground, and then how this becoming a self of God is the creation of things which is nothing other than the overcoming of divine egoism and as this overcoming, not the manufacturing of nature, but the temporal bending of her eternal essence.

This double and yet unified regard to the nature of the ground in God must guide us when we now follow the individual determinations. They always remain untrue as long as we understand them one-sidedly.

What Schelling hastily writes here in a few pages subsequently stimulated his reflection to make new attempts again and again for decades. He himself knows more clearly than others that it is only a “beginning” (compare I, VII, p. 169, Answer to Eschenmayer).

e. Longing as the Nature of the Ground in God (The Existence of God in Identity with His Ground.)

The nature of the ground in God is longing? Here the objection can hardly be held back any longer that a human state is transferred to God in this statement. Yes! But it could also be otherwise. Who has ever shown that longing is something merely human? Who has ever completely dismissed the possibility with adequate reasons that what we call “longing” and live within might ultimately be something other than we ourselves? Is there not contained in longing something which we have no reason to limit to man, something which rather gives us occasion to understand it as that in which we humans are freed beyond ourselves? Is not longing precisely the proof for the fact that man is something other than only a man? It is indeed a bad choice if we specifically choose longing in order to demonstrate an anthropomorphization of the god which creeps in with it. But
here we do not yet want to discuss in depth the anthropomorphic objection; its seemingly unshakable forcefulness is only to be generally shattered.

Right now it is more important to understand what this determination means philosophically. It is not supposed to attribute a quality to God, but the being a ground of the ground is to receive a determination. Of course, we must put aside all sentimentiality with this concept and pay sole attention to the nature of the metaphysical movement prevalent there.

“Addiction” (Die “Sucht”)—which has nothing to do with searching (Suchen) etymologically—primordially means sickness which strives to spread itself; sickly, disease. Addiction is a striving and desiring, indeed, the addiction of longing, of being concerned with oneself. A double, contrary movement is contained in longing: the striving away from itself to spread itself, and yet precisely back to itself. As the essential determination of the ground (of being a ground) in God, longing characterizes this Being as urging away from itself into the most indeterminate breadth of absolute essential fullness, and at the same time as the overpowering of joining itself to itself. In that the general nature of the will lies in desiring, longing is a will in which what is striving wills itself in the indeterminate, that is, wills to find itself in itself and wills to present itself in the expanded breadth of itself. But since the will in this willing is precisely not yet aware of itself and is not its own, is not yet really itself, the will remains an untrue will. The will in willing is the understanding, the understanding knowledge of the unifying unity of what wills and what is willed. As the will of the ground, longing is thus a will without understanding which, however, foresees precisely being a self in its striving. Eternal longing is a striving which itself, however, never admits of a stable formation because it always wants to remain longing. As a striving without understanding, it has nothing which has been understood and is to be brought to stand and stability, nothing which it could call something definite, unified. It is “nameless”; it does not know any name; it is unable to name what it is striving for. It is lacking the possibility of words.

But in these reflections we are still taking the ground for itself, and thus we go astray. For itself, in keeping with its innermost nature, the ground is, of course, ground for existence. This relation to emergence from self lies in it itself. And only in this orientation toward existence does the understanding of longing required here become complete. In the absolute beginning of the primal being, it is a matter of emergence-from-self which is yet a remaining-within-itself, so much so that this remaining-within-itself constitutes the first coming-to-itself. Longing is stirring, stretching away from itself and expanding. And just in this stirring lies and occurs the excitement of what stirs to itself. The propensity to present itself is the will to bring itself before itself, to re-present itself. Thus Schelling goes onto the next step after the first characterization of eternal longing (pp. 35-36): “But there is born in God Himself an inward, imaginative response, corresponding to this longing, which is the first stirring of divine Being in its still dark depths. Through
this response, God sees Himself in His own image, since His imagination can have no other object than Himself. This image is the first in which God, viewed absolutely, is realized, though only in Himself; it is the beginning in God, and is the God-begotten God Himself. This image is at one and the same time, reason—the logic of that longing. . . ."

We interrupt here.

Three things are to be emphasized here: (1) God's representing turned back to Himself is co-originial with the longing of the ground, (2) this representation is the word of that longing, and (3) representing as the true coming-to-oneself out of the original being-outside-of-itself of longing is the first existence, the first manner, of the absolute reality of the God Himself.

Regarding (1): God's self-representation has nothing other than the ground which God is. In His ground, God sees Himself. This seeing encompasses the whole infinite un-unfolded fullness of his nature. Un-unfolded, this fullness is an emptiness and the desert of God. But this seeing encompasses God's nature and thus throws light upon it and finds itself as the illuminated ground. In the ground God sees Himself, that is, in this longing as the first excited stirring—Himself as the one who sees, Himself as the one who represents Himself. For by bringing something before itself, what represents also places itself in the scope of what stands before it. This self-representing occurs by the ground's being represented. Thus, God sees "Himself" in the darkness of the ground, but in the counterimage of the ground. He sees his "likeness," but hidden in the un-unfolded ground.

Regarding (2): this self-re-presenting brings about the first illuminated separation in God in which, however, the eternal being does not fall apart; but, on the contrary, gathers Himself to Himself and establishes His own essential unity in this gathering. Gathering, establishing unity as such, is called legein in Greek, from this, logos which was later interpreted for definite reasons (compare Introduction to Metaphysics) as speech and word. Because of a creative affinity to this tradition of metaphysics, Schelling can say that that representing of the image is the "word." In what follows we shall meet this "word" in God's nature several times. To begin with, let us remember its metaphysical meaning: the word as the naming of what is gathered in itself, of unity, the first establishing of unity still remaining, however, in God Himself. But we know from the introduction that unity always means identity in the primordial sense, unification of what is in itself differentiated and separate. Thus, the differentiated is just as much contained in representation and the word as the unified, since the unified needs the difference for the fulfillment of its own nature. Therefore:

Regarding (3): The first existing occurs in God's first seeing of Himself in longing's hidden search for itself. But the first existing does not follow a time of longing afterwards, but belongs co-originally to longing in the eternity of becom-
Just as the ground is only a ground for existence, the emergence from itself to itself is only an emergence from the ground. But thus this existence does not repel the ground—on the contrary. Existing, the primal being places itself precisely and explicitly back in the ground. As existent, it has eternally taken over the ground and thus affirmed longing as eternal. Thus, it is and remains the continual consumption of itself which never devours itself, but precisely burns toward what is inextinguishable in order to maintain the light placed in it in its innermost darkness. The word in God, the eternal “yes” to itself is the eternal speech in which God co-responds and grants a place and emphasis to what the will of longing wills.

Thus, both determinations of essence, ground and existence, are clarified in God. But we saw that an essential reference leads from each to the other, and that means that they already presuppose a primordial unity in themselves. But only since the ground is active as ground and existing is active as existing is this unity itself established and placed within itself. If the presentation of the juncture of Being in God is understood correctly in this respect, then the train of thought must lead immediately to the presentation of this unity of the juncture of Being. This shows itself in the interpretation in the middle of the sentence which at the passage “The word of that longing” continues with “and the eternal Spirit which feels within it the Logos and everlasting longing. This Spirit, moved by that love which it itself is, utters the Word so that the understanding together with longing becomes creative and omnipotent Will and informs nature, at first unruly, as its own element or instrument.”

With “and the eternal Spirit” a new subject enters the sentence grammatically. What that subject is and how it is present is portrayed in what was read. It is said of eternal Spirit:

1. He feels in Himself on the one hand the word and at the same time eternal longing. This at the same time points to the fact that Spirit is that through which God as the existing brings Himself before Himself. But the existing one as such is related to his ground. Spirit means the unity of the ground in God and his existence. A unity, however, not in the empty sense of a relation merely thought, but as a unifying unity in which, as the origin, what is to be unified is present without losing its differentiation, is present precisely with it. Spirit feels in itself the word and longing at the same time—again, this “at the same time” does not mean empty simultaneity, but means the inner relation which word and longing have to each other. What longing always already was, it will always have been. But it will be this in the word which will only be what it already was. Longing is the nameless, but this always seeks precisely the word. The word is the elevation into what is illuminated, but thus related precisely to the darkness of longing. Spirit finds this reciprocal relation and in it what is related and thus itself. If ground and existence constitute the essence of a being as something existent in
itself, then Spirit is the primordially unifying unity of essence. This concept of Spirit should be borne in mind in everything that follows. Of eternal Spirit it is said:

2. It is “moved by love.” Here it is indicated that Spirit, too, is not yet the highest reality, not yet the innermost origin of self-movement in God and in primal Being in general. On the other hand, being moved by love also does not mean that love is only a motive for the working of Spirit, but it is the essence ruling in Spirit. Spirit is the primordially unifying unity which arises above the reciprocal relation as the reciprocal relation of ground and existence. As such a unity, Spirit is *pneuma*. This wafting is only the breath of what most primordially and truly unifies: love. We already referred to its metaphysical nature. It is primordial unity which as such joins what is different and can be for itself, holding them apart.

“For not even Spirit itself is supreme; it is but Spirit, or the breath of love. But love is supreme. It is that which was before there were the depths and before existence (as separate entities), but it was not there as love, rather—how shall we designate it” (p. 86).

Here words leave the thinker, too. Love moves Spirit. That means that its primordial unification of the being with itself wants what is different, what could be for itself, precisely to *be* different and move apart. For without this, love would not have what it unified, and without such uniting, it would not be itself. The will of love thus wills not some blind unification, in order to have some kind of unity, but it wills separation initially and really always, not so that things should just remain that way, but so that the ground might remain for ever higher unification. Now we must grasp the core of the statement:

3. Eternal Spirit moved by love “utters the word.” The “utterance of the word”—until now the word, the opening of the unity of what is disparate, the gathering of the unruly to its inner law, until now the word still remained in God. Now Spirit, that is, love, utters the word because it wants to *be* the unity of what is separated. Spirit speaks the word of the understanding. This word co-responds to the ground in the ground. Ground and existence in their unity, the jointure of Being is uttered. Into what? Into the other, what God is not as He Himself is, into the ground, the un-ruly and what is yet ordered in a hidden way, what still is present without gathering, into that which needs gathering, into the mere, unruly stirring of the ground. The utterance of the word is the speaking of the word into the ground, into the unruly in order for it to elevate itself to unity. As the will of love, Spirit is the will to what is in opposition. This will wills the will of the ground and wills this will of the ground as the counterwill to the will of the understanding. As love, Spirit wills the opposing unity of those two wills. But what is the unity of such opposing wills? What happens when what always strives back to itself, and yet expands itself, enters the will of opening and gathering and unifying? What happens when the gathering will as such must be broken by the
resistance of what strives apart? Form and gestalt come about, and the will becomes a formative will.

4. Spirit uttering itself is formative will. And it is formative in that to which it utters itself, in the ground which as longing—by itself—can never bring about the definiteness of a lasting formation and a name. “Original nature,” the ground active in itself, now comes to word. “Now” the will of the ground is an awakened, formative will. Original, unruly nature is now creating nature, not just urging will. “Now” creation occurs in the creating rule of Spirit. And only as this creating will does time come about, more exactly, is its becoming prepared. This “now” is an eternal now. Creation is not added to God’s nature as a particular act sometime—there is, of course, no time. For as the existing one, God is what emerges from Himself. He emerges from Himself by speaking the word into original nature. (Regarding the text: “utter the word that...,” not “which,” and the “that” means the “that” of consequence, “so that”; but this consequence not as an external consequence, but just the consequence following in the word is uttered.)

Now we are able to look over the whole sentence and thus to grasp correctly the meaning of the “and” with which it begins. This “and” does not simply connect what follows to what precedes. Rather, it joins what was said about longing for itself and about the understanding for itself together in the living unity of the Spirit. But it does this in such a way that Spirit itself as the existing one shows itself also only in the utterance of the word. Eternal Spirit is the primordial unity of ground and existence in God. Ground and existence are each in their way the totality of the Absolute, and as such they belong together and are inseparable. What longing insisting upon itself wills is the same as what the word of the understanding wills and raises to the clearing of representing. Ground and existence in God are only various aspects of the one primordial unity. But in that eternal Spirit becomes present as ground, it becomes present as that which it is not as itself, what its eternal past striving back to itself is. Ground and existence are eternally separated in eternal Spirit in such a way that they are eternally indissoluble as the same.

f. Creation as the Movement of Becoming of the Absolute and of Created Beings. The Individuation of Created Beings.

“Eternal Spirit” is the determination in which the unity of the God unto Himself, the identity of the Absolute, develops. This coming to oneself, however, is in itself self-utterance as speaking oneself into the unruly nature (Natur) of the ground. This means that the “eternal deed” of creation already belongs to God’s essence. What belongs to the essence of creation itself is already prefigured here. Now, however, it is expressly analyzed in the following section (pp. 36-37):
The first effect of the understanding in nature is the separation of forces, which is the only way in which the understanding can unfold and develop the unity which had necessarily but unconsciously existed within nature, as in a seed; just as in man in the dark longing to create something, light comes about in that thoughts separate out of the chaotic confusion of thinking in which all are connected but each prevents the other from coming forth—so the unity appears which contains all within it and which had lain hidden in the depths. Or it is as in the case of the plant which escapes the dark fetters of gravity only as it unfolds and spreads its powers, developing its hidden unity as its substance becomes differentiated. For since this Being (of primal nature) is nothing else than the eternal ground of God’s existence, it must contain within itself, though locked away, God’s essence, as a light of life shining in the dark depths.

But longing, roused by reason, now strives to preserve this light shining within it and returns unto itself so that a ground of being might ever remain. In this way there is first formed something comprehensible and individuated; since the understanding, in the light which has appeared in the beginning of nature, rouses longing (which is yearning to return into itself) to divide the forces (to surrender darkness) and in this very division brings out the unity enclosed in what was divided, the hidden light. And this (forming of something comprehensible) does not occur by external discovery, but through a genuine invention, since what arises in nature is conceived in it, or, still better, through revival, the understanding reviving the unity or idea concealed in the sundered depths. These forces which are divided but not completely separated in this division, are the material out of which the body will later be molded; while the soul is that living nexus which arises, as the center of these forces, in their division, from the depths of nature. Because primal reason elevates the soul as inner reality out of a ground which is independent of the understanding, the soul, on this account, remains independent of it, a separate and self-maintained being.

It can readily be seen that in the tension of longing necessary to bring things completely to birth, the innermost nexus of the forces can only be released in a graded evolution, and at every stage in the division of forces there is developed out of nature a new being whose soul must be all the more perfect the more differentiated it contains what was left undifferentiated in the others. It is the task of a complete philosophy of nature to show how each successive process more closely approaches the essence of nature, until in the highest division of forces the innermost center is disclosed.

In order to grasp correctly the inner intention and movement of this train of thought, we must remember our task: projecting the inner possibility of evil as something spiritual existing for itself, that is, the possibility of human being. But because he is different and separated from God, man is something created. Therefore, it is first necessary to sketch out created beings in their essence.

It was shown now that the origin of creation lies in the essence of eternal Spirit. But it can be seen from the essence of the creator what belongs to the essence of what is created, how it is. Creating is not the manufacturing of something which is not there, but the bending of the eternal will of longing into the will of the word, of gathering. For this reason created beings are themselves a willing and what
becomes in willing. But in this becoming what becomes is always, as a being, what it is purposely capable of as a willing being, no more and no less.

However, Schelling does not plan to report on what went on during the creation of the world back then, but attempts to make concrete how the movement of the creation of nature is constructed in itself. Yet that contains at the same time a determination of how created nature “is” as such, in what sense its independence and its self-ruling can be conceived metaphysically. Previously—and still now—one took the answer to this question very lightly: either one thinks of the creation in the sense of the manipulation of a craftsman who manufactures things and puts them on their feet—this interpretation does not do a thing for a real questioning of the essence of things, on the contrary—or one grasps the being-in-itself of things solely in terms of the side that they are objects of theoretical observation for us and then says how as objects they are independent of this subject in such observation and in relation to the observing subject. The question of this independence is indeed very essential. It has not yet been truly asked even today, let alone answered, but this independence of things of our observation is only an essential consequence of their being self-contained. But the latter cannot be explained by the former, at best it can be indicated.

Thus, in following Schelling’s project of the essence of the movement of creating-created nature we must keep the metaphysical question of Being in mind. We must not slip back into the attitude of a naive curiosity which would like at this opportunity to take a look behind the secret of the workshop. This “back then” does not exist at all, because the occurrence is eternal and that means also a nowmoment (ein jetzt augenblickliches).

We heard that the Being of things is a becoming. Being created thus does not mean being manufactured, but standing in creation as a becoming. Thus, everything depends on grasping the movement of this becoming. But since the creature (das Wesen), the being-in-itself always has its essence in the unity of ground and existence and since this “unity” is not an external, mechanistic piecing together of two pieces, but rather the reciprocal relation as a unified self-relating and “self-attraction and repulsion,” we must look for the movement in the essence of creation in this reciprocal relation of ground and existence. But, moreover, since “creation” as occurrence is the emergence from self of the Absolute coming-to-itself, the movement in the essence of creation and thus of the becoming and Being of created nature must be understood in terms of the essence of the eternal ground and eternal understanding and their eternal unity as that of absolute Spirit.

We can facilitate the understanding of the section cited by emphasizing a question which is in the air, but does not get asked explicitly. That is the following:

However creation is understood, a fundamental determination of the creature is essential, that is, that it is always something definite, individual, a “this.” The question of the becoming of the creature is thus the question of the becoming of
the individual, that is, of the essence of individuation and thus of the ground of determination of the individual in its individuality. This question is familiar in the history of metaphysics as that of the principium individuationis. We can say that Schelling gives one of the most profound and fruitful presentations of this principle in the movement of becoming of creation itself. We shall try now to understand the section by analyzing the movement of becoming of the creature and creating in its individual aspects sketched there.

1. We must begin by remembering that eternal Spirit is the unity of existence grounding itself in the ground and of the ground emerging from itself in existence. The “first” primordial stirring is the illumination of the understanding, seeing itself. But since the ground in God is indeed not He Himself, yet not separated from Him, and since the ground as longing seeks precisely what the understanding sees, seeing itself “is” at the same time the illumination of brightness in the darkness of longing. God sees Himself in the brightness illuminating in the darkness of the ground.

2. But just this seeing itself in the other as its other becomes a speaking-itself-into this other in the word of Spirit uttering itself. That looks like a union, and it is one. But it is not only that, it is simultaneously the separation. For the light of the understanding separates itself from darkness as the other. Separation and distinction rule in the becoming of the ground as opened ground.

3. However, the other, the ground is not repulsed, but in that light is spoken into the ground, what longing seeks “namelessly” becomes brighter in the longing of the ground. The essential consequence of this is that longing now really wants to reach and maintain for itself—in itself—what illuminates. Light opens up darkness. But since darkness is longing willing itself, what is illuminated is now really aroused to strive back to itself and thus to strive toward the opening. This means that the separation as illumination in the ground brings it about that the ground strives more and more fundamentally toward the ground and as the ground individuating itself separates itself.

4. On the other hand, however, the longing of the ground is aroused by the understanding to give up the darkness and thus itself in the illumination of itself. But illumination giving up darkness means gaining power over the articulating and ruling unity, over the law and the universal, over what determines.

5. The ground’s arousal to itself by the understanding means the arousal of what is sundering itself to separation, to a separation which at the same time elevates itself to the light, that is, to the rule, and becomes definiteness. But a separation which determines itself in sundering and takes on definiteness is individuation into an individual. In that the ground in its active unity with the understanding strives back to itself and yet at the same time elevates itself away from itself to the light, this active unity, the word of Spirit, is nothing other than letting the individual sunder itself. The becoming of creation is thus an awakening of the still unactivated unity in the ground of longing. The understanding does not
place something external before itself. Rather, as what opens the closed unity, it only in-forms itself in the searching and striving of the ground. Creation is in-forming of the light in the dark, awakening of darkness to itself as to light and thus at the same time away from itself—separation.

6. But an important characterization is still lacking for the complete understanding of the essence of the movement of becoming in creation. The double, antithetical arousal of the ground to sundering and determination, this double, antithetical willing of the ground in the light of awakening reason is itself what creates. But in that what sunder s itself brings itself to definiteness, that is, unified unification, what was hidden in the ground is always just elevated to light. The unity, the band itself, becomes lighter and more definite. This unity elevates itself from the ground of the separation of forces; it does not come upon them in addition as an external noose. The more the ground wants to contract into separation and yet the more a more open unity is sought thereby, the more the primordial unity of ground and existence emerges. Creating unity is the band, the copula, that is, what binds ground and existence of the actual being. Schelling calls this band elevating itself to definiteness and yet remaining in the ground the soul, in contradistinction to the Spirit. Elevated from the ground sundering itself, the soul continues to belong to it and thus to be an individual sundering itself.

The soul is that unity of ground and existence which does take shape elevated from the ground, but as that band which still remains bound in the unified individual it does not emerge from the individual and explicitly confront it and utter itself as such. That is the realm of nature as yet without language, but developing itself in an articulated and attuned manifold of forms.

7. In the becoming of creation a continual strife is present of longing contracting itself against expansion into the open. But the more light and definite the forms of nature become, the more oppositional and self-willed the ground becomes.

But the more separated what is separating itself is, the richer the inner jointure of the individuated being becomes, and the band still entangled in the ground must release itself all the more. This release of the band, however, only means a clearer, more definite bond in the sense of the unifying development and containing of what is separated. The higher the separation of forces, the deeper the contraction of the ground toward its innermost ground. The more primordial the contraction, the more powerful the opening unity of the band must become. Thus, what creates brings an increase in itself in accordance with this oppositional movement. Therefore, it is comprehensible that creation itself can only come about in definite stages. These stages in nature’s becoming lead to nature’s ever coming closer to itself without, however, ever completely reaching itself as nature itself and without ever completely releasing the anchor of its band in itself.

8. We can pin down the factors of the movement of becoming of creation in a summarizing list. Creation is the emergence from itself of the Absolute which
thus wills toward itself from the ground—is itself a willing. The original way of willing is the stirring of longing. Co-primordially, the understanding brings this stirring of dark self-seeking to arousal and thus to craving. But the separation from what arouses occurs in this craving and since the latter yet remains in unity with the ground, the understanding itself as the clearing of the dark becomes the in-forming of unity in the un-ruled. As clearing, in-forming is at the same time elevation of what is unified to the clearer unity and thus formation of the band as anchored in unity. Elevation to an ever higher unity includes the staging of nature’s becoming in individual stages and realms. All of these terms which we are using—stirring, arousal, separation and in-forming, elevation and staging—characterize a movement in their reciprocal relation which can never be grasped mechanically as manipulation in a mass of things at all.

Schelling understands the creation of nature as a becoming which now yet determines its Being, a becoming which is nothing other than the ground in God urging toward itself. As what is sought for, God sees himself in this ground as in eternal longing.

Thus what existing and becoming nature seeks in itself is the formation of the glimpse of life seen in its darkness into its own special form. But it also belongs to the essence of nature to remain longing and never to find this form for itself as nature. The moment it is found, what creates must leave nature and transcend it, thus standing above it. In nature’s highest stage where her creating finds rest and is transformed, man comes into being.

What was said in the last lecture has remained incomprehensible. Since a lecture cannot have the task of mouthing what is incomprehensible, we have to make up for this if possible. We do get into a strange position in our task, that is, in every philosophical lecture—for there is something incomprehensible in what we have to discuss. And we would thus go against our task if we even tried to dissolve everything into a flat comprehensibility and thus get rid of the incomprehensible element.

In our special case, Schelling’s text should become comprehensible in this way. It may very well have been true in the previous lecture that the text was much clearer than what was said about it afterwards. That is quite in order. For the text gives the primordial motion of the thought. However, the “interpretation”—if we can call it that—extracted the essential factors for themselves which are in motion in this motion in eight separated points. What was said must be transformed back to that motion. The goal of a correct interpretation must be to reach the moment where it makes itself superfluous and the text comes into its undiminished right. But we are again far away from that. How would it be if the interpretation tried to follow the movement of the train of thought instead of splitting everything up into points? That would be possible. But if as an interpretation it is supposed to be more than a feeble imitation of the text, the presentation on the other hand necessarily becomes more differentiated and
extended and thus again not as easy to survey and less transparent. For that is a difficulty in understanding: to see what is multifaceted and at the same time in motion. However, the real difficulty of comprehension has a more profound reason. What is at stake here? The presentation of the essential origin of the creature from the Absolute, and indeed with the intention of determining man’s essence. The essential origin of the creature can only become visible in the light of the movement of creating, of its essence. In presenting all this, it is a matter of an essential project, not the literal depiction of something objectively present somewhere which can be directly shown. To think in a project means to place before oneself the inner potentiality of being of something in its necessity. This is completely different from explaining something lying in front of us, that is, only referring and postponing it to another thing that can be shown.

But this projectural procedure must, after all, put something in the project, thus it must yet have something previously given as a beginning and point of departure. Certainly, and here is the second main difficulty. In projecting the movement of becoming of creation the realm is posited: God, creating and the creature, things including man. And just what is to be moved into the essential project with regard to its context of becoming must now be understood from the outset differently from the way that common representing understands what was named, God not as an old papa with a white beard who manufactures things, but as the becoming God to whose essence the ground belongs, uncreated nature which is not He Himself.

Created nature is not to be understood as nature as it is now, as we see it, but as becoming, creating nature, as something creating which is itself created, the natura naturans as natura naturata of Scotus Eriugena.

Man is not to be understood as that familiar living being gifted with reason who hangs around on a planet and can be dissected into his components, but as that being who is in himself the “deepest abyss” of Being and at the same time “the highest heaven.”

God, nature, and man are understood from the very beginning in a different way and as such they must only now and at the same time move into the essential project of their becoming. This becoming is the essence of Being. Thus Being also cannot be understood as the brute existence of something manufactured, but must be understood as the jointure of ground and existence. The jointure is not a rigid jungle gym of determinations but—itself presencing in itself in the reciprocal relation—presences as will.

It was important now to follow this original becoming of the Absolute, how as this becoming it becomes something which has become, how the Absolute creating itself descends and enters the creature, in creating and as a creating. But this descending and entering is not a decline into something lowly, but in accordance with the inner reciprocal relation of the jointure of Being is in itself a fetching forth of what is always already hidden in the ground into the light and
into individuation. Creation is eternal and "is," understood dialectically, the existence of the Absolute itself.

By constantly distancing the idea of creating as a manipulation, we see that in this creating a creator does not remain for himself and set up something manufactured merely as something other, but that the creator himself in creating transforms himself into a created being and thus himself still remains in the created being.

Forgoing an emphasis on the individual factors in themselves, let us once more go through the eight points.

The God in becoming emerges in his becoming to something which has become and is the one who he is in this becoming as it. The inner-divine becoming is originally the self-seeing of the God himself in his ground so that this look remains in the ground. Just as when one person looks at the other in a distant correspondence and, looking into him, kindles something in him by this look in order that it may become clearer in him, longing becomes clearer in the self-seeing of the God in his ground, but that means precisely all the more aroused and craving. The ground thus wants to be more and more ground, and at the same time it can only will this by willing what is clearer and thus striving against itself as what is dark.

Thus it strives for the opposite of itself and produces a separation in itself. The more groundly (striving into the ground) and at the same time the more clearly (striving for unification) the separation becomes, the further apart what is separated, ground and existence become; but what unifies comes all the more profoundly from the ground and the unification strives all the further into the light, the band becomes all the more relaxed, the manifold of what is bound together becomes all the more rich.
When ground and existence, what contracts and what determines strive further and further away from each other and thus precisely toward each other in the clearing unity, the creator himself changes into the individuation of what is created. For only where something separating itself and contracting itself in opposition is forced at the same time into the definiteness of the rule, of the universal, does an individual come about, a this which as a this is at the same time the particular and the universal, a this and, as a this, a such. The more oppositional the unity of what becomes, the more creating the creator, and all the more does it lose the indeterminacy of urging without measure or rule. The more selfish becoming is, the clearer and higher at the same time is what has become of it. But selfishness grows precisely when the ground clears. Thus, in this becoming oppositional in itself, there is a continual self-transcendence and a striving outward and upward to ever higher stages. Ground and existence separate further and further, but in such a way that they are ever in unison in the form of an ever higher being. Becoming creates stages in itself. The movement of creating-created nature is thus an urge to life which revolves in itself and, revolving, overflows itself and, overflowing itself, individuates itself and, individuating itself, elevates itself to a higher stage. Speaking formally, the identity of the jointure of Being, oppositional in itself, transfers the being commensurate with it, that is, what is becoming to ever higher potencies.

What Schelling attempts to grasp here in essence is just the movement of any living being in general, the essential construction of the movement of life, which is from the outset not to be grasped with the usual ideas about movement. We could and would have to appeal to Schelling's own philosophy of nature for clarification. But on the one hand, it takes on another orientation here and then it cannot be "reported on" briefly. Movement is what is essential in it, and thus the correct perspective is decisive for comprehension. It is not the content of the philosophy of nature and its unspoken presuppositions that hinder us from getting this perspective. What hinders us most is the common idea of nature and its reality, of what we admit as reality. Therefore, it is important for an assimilation of the philosophy of nature to know and recognize for what it is the common views of nature in their commonness.

g. The Questionability of Today’s Interpretation of Nature. Reality and Objective Presence (Vorhandenheit)

With general consent, one will say that in order to get some correct idea about nature one must stick to real nature. Without this footing everything becomes a wild dream. But what does one mean here by “reality” of nature?

It is highly dubious whether what an investigator of nature today ascertains as really objectively present, is what is real. It can indeed be something which is ascertainable as something objectively present, but what has been ascertained as
objectively present is not yet what is real. Admittedly, one would like to answer, but we can only find what is real if we stick to what is objectively present and go back from it. Counterquestion: go back to what? Who will show the way? The danger in this procedure is that we might just find something objectively present as something unreal. The reality of nature is a problem all its own. Nature “as we see it now” shows a stabilized order, rule, and form. What could be more obvious than to want to know this rule better by searching for the regularity of what is ordered and to bring the rules to more universal determinations, to higher rules. The intention of scientific questioning leads to what it already includes at its incipience as a prejudice. Everything is regular and according to rule, therefore everything must be explicable in principle. If the further prejudice is included in this prejudice that explanation is really thoroughgoing calculability, then the demand surfaces of explaining life phenomena in a completely mechanical way.

But if the possible one-sidedness and limits of mechanism are pointed out, then one explains that mechanism is only a “principle of investigation.” One should not deny that there is something inexplicable in living beings, but one should only want at first to penetrate so far and so long until one comes to a boundary with this mechanical kind of explanation. This procedure alone is exact and objective. Behind this widespread opinion, which is strangely enough even fortified by atomic physics today, lies a series of fundamental errors.

1. The opinion that when one one day meets up with something which can no longer be explained mechanistically that this something inexplicable is really ascertained and recognized. In this way it is only misinterpreted by being locked within the scope of possible explicability which in this case becomes impossible.

2. The deception that one would ever come to such a boundary with mechanism. It is precisely the essence of mechanism that—as long as anything palpable is there at all, and that is always the case—it won’t give up, it thinks up new ways and such ways can always be found in principle.

3. The fundamental error that a principle of investigation is already justified by one’s getting somewhere with its aid. One always gets somewhere of necessity with the principle of mechanism, therefore it can not be demonstrated specifically in its truth in this way. The truth of a principle can in general never be demonstrated by success. For the interpretation of a success as a success is, after all, accomplished with the help of the presupposed but unfounded principle.

4. The failure to recognize that every true beginning of principles of investigation must be grounded in a project, grounded in the essence of truth itself, of the essential constitution of the realm in question. Thus, in relation to living nature what is decisive (and never yet seriously undertaken) is the essential project of life movement as movement.

Of course, when we look at nature in front of us in a way seemingly purely objective with our everyday eyes and in the direction of the everyday paths of experience; we see regularities and in the face of them look for the rules just as if
they belonged to nature from the very beginning, just as if nothing different had ever happened. But perhaps this regularity is only what has become rigidified of a past stirring of that becoming viewed metaphysically, a rest behind which lies the original unruliness of the ground; just as if it could erupt again, unruliness not just being the lack and indeterminacy of the rule. However one might interpret this, it is certain that the “natural” everyday attitude to nature is finally very unnatural. The fact that nature permits itself to be reckoned with and calculated rather speaks for the fact that she deceives us thereby and keeps us at a distance rather than allowing us to attain a true knowledge.

h. Self-Will and Universal Will. The Separability of the Principles in Man as the Condition of the Possibility of Evil.

The project of the movement of becoming of creation should make clear how the creator does not have intrinsically just an individual as a result, but is intrinsically in-forming individuation. The essence of the ground is the heightening contraction together with the clearer emergence of articulated unities. But this occurs in such a way that both join themselves as unified in the unity of the actual life forms of an actual stage of being of nature. The deepening of the ground is the expansion of existence. Both together are the intensification of separation as the heightening of unity. All of this together is the stages of the individuation and withdrawal from each other of the principles (ground and existence) in the bond of individuation.

Schelling ends the essential project of the creation of nature with an explicit characterization of the principles which are active in every being in accordance with the movement of creation (pp. 37-38).

Every being which has arisen in nature in the way indicated contains a double principle which, however, is at bottom one and the same regarded from the two possible aspects. The first principle is the one by which they are separated from God or wherein they exist in the mere ground. But as a primordial unity occurs between that which is in the ground and what is prefigured in the understanding, the process of creation consists only in an inner transmutation or transfiguration to light of the original dark principle (since the understanding or the light which occurs in nature is really only searching in the ground for that light which is akin to it and is turned inward). The second principle, which by its own nature is dark, is at the same time the very one which is transfigured in light, and the two are one in every natural being, though only to a certain extent. The dark principle since it arises from the depths and is dark is the self-will of creatures, but since it has not yet risen to complete unity with light, as the principle of the understanding self-will cannot grasp it, is mere craving or desire, that is, blind will. This self-will of creatures stands in opposition to the understanding universal will, and the latter makes use of the former and subordinates it to itself as a mere tool.

Of course, according to the fundamental principle these must be the factors of
the jointure of Being, but now more definite in accordance with the being in becoming.

With regard to the ground, created things are separated from God. But what the ground's craving seeks is the same as what is prefigured in the understanding as something cleared. Thus creation is nothing else but the transfiguration of the dark, urging back to the ground, to light. The self-will of the ground striving back to itself is thus in what is created. But this self-craving stands against the will of the understanding which strives for rule and unity, and therein for the bond of everything everywhere to the one. Its will is the universal will. The particular will of the ground is subserviently subordinated to this universal will. Where craving for separation remains guided by the will for the universal, what craves itself determined by this universal will, becomes something particular, separate for itself. The latter does not relinquish self-will—every animal is evidence of this—but it is bound to the universal of the species, again, every animal is evidence of this.

The animal is an individual this. It could not be this if the craving for individuation were not in it. But the animal never comes to itself, in spite of this craving. It rather merely serves, again, the species in spite of this craving. And it could not perform this service if a universal will did not strive within it with the particular will at the same time.

We know that the project of the movement of becoming of creating creatures is oriented to the ongoing task of explicating the metaphysical possibility of man. This possibility in its turn is to show in what the conditions of the inner possibility of evil consist. Now everything is prepared for determining man's possibility of becoming and thus his essential origin and his position in beings as a whole.

But this will becomes one whole with the primal will or reason when, in the progressive transformation and division of all forces, there is totally revealed in light the inmost and deepest point of original darkness, in One Being. The will of this One Being, to the extent to which it is individual, is also a particular will, though in itself or as the center of all other particular wills it is one with the primal will or understanding. This elevation of the most abysmal center into light occurs in no creatures visible to us except in man. In man there exists the whole power of the principle of darkness and, in him, too, the whole force of light. In him there are both centers—the deepest pit and the highest heaven. Man's will is the seed—concealed in eternal longing—of God, present as yet only in the depths—the divine light of life locked in the depths which God divined when he determined to will nature. Only in him (in man) did God love the world—and it was this very image of God which was grasped in its center by longing when it opposed itself to light. By reason of the fact that man takes his rise from the depths (that he is a creature) he contains a principle relatively independent of God. But just because this very principle is transfigured in light—without therefore ceasing to be basically dark—something higher, Spirit, arises in man. For the eternal Spirit pronounces unity, or the Word, in nature. But the (real) Word, pronounced, exists only in the unity of light
and darkness (vowel and consonant). Now these two principles do indeed exist in all things, but without complete consonance because of the inadequacy of that which has been raised from the depths. Only in man, then, is the Word completely articulate, which in all other creatures was held back and left unfinished. But in the articulate word Spirit reveals itself, that is God as existing, in act. Now inasmuch as the soul is the living identity of both principles, it is Spirit; and Spirit is in God. If, now, the identity of both principles were just as indissoluble in man as in God, then there would be no difference—that is, God as Spirit would not be revealed. Therefore, that unity which is indissoluble in God must be dissoluble in man—and this constitutes the possibility of good and evil. (Pp. 38-39)

In general and in anticipation we should say in man, nature's becoming comes to rest in such a way that at the same time nature is abandoned in man. But in order that we may retain a sufficiently broad scope for the understanding of man's metaphysical becoming, we must remember something said earlier. Eternal becoming in God has as its eternal beginning this, that God sees his image in what eternal longing seeks in the ground itself. But becoming in the cleared ground is in one respect a continual longing, striving back to itself, and the brighter the clearing, the more self-willed the craving in the creature to reach the deepest ground, in the center of itself. The heightened particular will in nature's beings is a return, eternally craving but never attainable by nature itself, to the deepest ground—a searching of the God.

As particular will, the becoming of creatures thus strives more and more to the innermost center of the ground where this divine life-look shines. But it does this in such a way that this self-craving is elevated to the universal will and remains bound in the band, the soul of the actual life unity of the actual stage of life. But when the particular will of the created-creating one reaches into the ground's deepest center and grasps this will, it grasps the center and the ground of all particular wills.

But in the becoming of creatures in unity with self-craving, the elevation to the pure light of the understanding corresponds to this striving back to the center of the deepest ground, the deepest self-craving of the longing of the ground, so that the universal will and the center of all particular wills now fold into each other and become the same. Thus the very deepest ground—containing itself—is at the same time elevated to the broadest clearing of the pure understanding. We find such a becoming in creatures only in man, better yet: as man.

The will of man "is" thus in itself nothing other than the restrained thrust of the God who now only dwells in the ground; longing hidden in itself wills in man, that is, the ground independent of God which is not God himself. But just this will of the ground in man is raised in him to the light of the understanding. In man the word is completely uttered. Man utters himself and becomes present in language. Thus man elevates himself above the light of the understanding. He does not just move within what is cleared like the animal, but utters this light and thus raises
himself above it. In this standing above it he “is” another unity of the kind of that unity which we are already familiar with, that unification which itself rules the light and the dark in their reciprocal relationship—Spirit—and is Spirit. In man—and as far as we know in man alone—are both principles, the deepest of the ground, the self-will to be a self, and the highest of the word, the will to the cleared Being of the unity of the whole, a unity of its own. “The deepest abyss and the highest heaven” are in man.

Because self-will, the striving back to itself, is elevated in man to the understanding and the word, selfhood as such is Spirit in man. Man “is” a selflike, special being separated from God which in its separateness wills precisely the most hidden will of the ground and as Spirit sees itself at the same time in the unity of its separated particularity. In this self-seeing the self-will is elevated to Spirit, and thusly not perhaps weakened and diverted, but now truly placed in higher possibilities of its powerfulness. In this self-seeing, man is beyond all of nature and creatures in the previous sense.

In that selfhood is Spirit, it is free of both principles. How so? The principle of the ground, nature as self-willed, no longer simply serves an equally impotent species revolving within itself like the animal. Rather, being spiritual, self-will can be directed one way or the other. As self-will, it is freely flexible with regard to the universal will. The latter, being itself Spirit, is something for which man can decide one way or another. The spiritual universal will does not simply mean the preservation of a self-contained species, but is history and thus work and unwork, victory and defeat, form maintaining itself and decline. In the selfhood of man as spiritual, both principles are indeed thus together, but the unity of the principle is separable here, yes, it must be separable. For in order that God can exist as Spirit; that is, can emerge from himself as such a one and present himself, in order that he can become revealed as the unity of both principles, this unity which is inseparable in the eternal Spirit must now itself diverge and present itself in a separability. The band of the principles, of the particular will and the universal will, is in man a free band, not a necessary one as in God. Man’s particular will is as spiritual a will elevated above nature, no longer merely a tool serving the universal will.

This separability of the two principles belonging to man’s essential being is, however, nothing other than the condition of the possibility of evil. How so? Because self-will here is a selflike spiritual will, in the unity of human willing it can put itself in the place of the universal will. Being spiritual, self-will can strive to be that which it is merely by remaining in the divine ground also as creature. As separated selfhood it can will to be the ground of the whole. Self-will can elevate itself above everything and only will to determine the unity of the principles in terms of itself. This ability is the faculty of evil.

The inner possibility of evil is the question of the inner possibility of being
human. Man is a created being, not an absolute one, and indeed an extraordinary stage and place within creatures creating themselves. We must define this stage and place.

With this intention, the movement of becoming of nature creating itself had to be followed in its essence. The result was: nature comes to a boundary which consists in the fact that it never comes to itself.

Although nature emerges to the manifold of the stages of formation and sequences of becoming within itself, the band which unified these formations always remains itself bound to what is bound. The species does not emerge as a law for itself in order as this emergence to ground a higher being in existence. Are there other beings which are not nature? The sole being of this kind that we know of is man.

Thus in him the principles are different. They are indeed the same principles, but their way of being a principle is different.

But why is self-willed elevation itself evil? In what does the malice of evil consist? According to the given new determination of freedom, freedom is the faculty of good and evil. Accordingly, evil proclaims itself as a position of will of its own, indeed as a way of being free in the sense of being a self in terms of its own essential law. By elevating itself above the universal will, the individual will wants precisely to be that will. Through this elevation a way of unification of its own takes place, thus a way of its own of being Spirit. But the unification is a reversal of the original will, and that means a reversal of the unity of the divine world in which the universal will stands in harmony with the will of the ground. In this reversal of the wills the becoming of a reversed god, of the counterspirit, takes place, and thus the upheaval against the primal being, the revolt of the adversary element against the essence of Being, the reversal of the jointure of Being into the disjointure in which the ground elevates itself to existence and puts itself in the place of existence. But reversal and upheaval are nothing merely negative and nugatory, but negation placing itself in dominance. Negation now transposes all forces in such a way that they turn against nature and creatures. The consequence of this is the ruin of beings.

By way of clarifying malice Schelling mentions disease. Disease makes itself felt to "feeling" as something very real, not just as a mere absence of something. When a man is sick, we do say that he "is not quite all right" ("dass ihm etwas fehlt") and thus express the sickness merely negatively as a lack. But this: "Why is he not quite right?" ("Wofthlt es?") really means "What is the matter with him, something which has, so to speak, gotten loose from the harmony of being healthy and, being on the loose, wants to take over all of existence and dominate it?" In the case of sickness, there is not just something lacking, but something wrong. "Wrong" not in the sense of something only incorrect, but in the genuine sense of falsification, distortion, and reversal. This falsification is at the same time false in
the sense of what is sly. We speak of malignant disease. Disease is not only a disruption, but a reversal of the whole existence which takes over the total condition and dominates it.

The true essence of negation which revolts as reversal in evil can only be understood if we comprehend the concept of affirmation of the positive and position primordially enough. Affirmation is not just a simple yes as the affirmation of something objectively present, but is the affirmation of the harmony of what is in tune with itself, in the order of being. Thus in the "positive" lies the affirmation of the essential unity of a being as a whole. Correspondingly, negation is not just rejection of what is objectively present, but no-saying places itself in the position of the yes. What replaces the place of harmony and attunement is disharmony, the wrong tone which enters the whole. Primordially conceived, affirmation is not just the recognition coming afterward from without of something already existing, but affirmation as the yes harmonizing everything, penetrating it and putting it in tune with itself; similarly the no. We usually put yes and no with yes- and no-saying, correctly so. But in doing this we understand saying first of all and decisively as speaking a simple sentence about a thingy situation, "logically"; this, however, wrongly. Saying is not only and not primarily speaking. Saying and language have a primordial essence in human existence and, correspondingly, so do affirmation and negation.

Negation as reversal is thus only and truly possible when what is in itself ordered in relation to each other—ground and existence—becomes mutually free to move and thus offers the possibility of a reversed unity. For example, in the animal as in every other natural being the dark principle of the ground is just as active as that of the light and of representing. But here, as everywhere in nature, these principles are unified only in a fixed way and determined once and for all. In terms of the animal itself, they can never be altered in their relation to each other, and an animal can thus never be "evil" even if we sometimes talk this way. The animal never gets out of the unity of its determined stage of nature. Even where an animal is "cunning," this cunning remains limited to a quite definite path, within quite definite situations and comes of necessity into play there.

But man is that being who can turn his own essential constituency around, turn the jointure of Being of his existence into dis-jointure. He stands in the jointure of his Being in such a way that he disposes over this jointure and its joining in a quite definite way. Thus, the dubious advantage is reserved for man of sinking beneath the animal, whereas the animal is not capable of reversing the principles. And it is not able to do this since the striving of the ground never attains the illumination of self-knowledge because in the animal the ground never reaches either the innermost depth of longing or the highest scope of spirit.

Thus the ground of evil lies in the primal will of the first ground which has become revealed. Evil has its ground in the ground independent of God and is nothing other than this ground, this ground as the selflike primal will which has
emerged to the separate selfhood of created spirit and stepped into the place of the universal will. Not only does something positive lie in evil in general, but the most positive element of nature itself, the ground's willing to come to itself, "is" the negative here, "is" as negation in the form of evil. It is not finitude as such that constitutes evil, but finitude elevated to the dominance of self-will. This elevation, however, is possible only as spiritual elevation and for this reason evil belongs in the realm of domination of Spirit and history.

Schelling gives his presentation of the essential origin of evil a yet sharper emphasis by adding a discussion with "other explanations" of evil, especially that of Leibniz. We shall omit them here because what is essential about this criticism becomes understandable in terms of the positive element presented and because a more precise treatment of the discussion with Leibniz would require us to talk of Leibniz's philosophy in terms of its fundamental metaphysical position, not possible within the framework of this interpretation.

With regard to the whole first section, and also with respect to all that follows a note is, of course, still necessary.

Schelling calls disease "the true counterpart of evil or sin" (p. 41). Accordingly, he equates evil with sin. But "sin" can be defined theologically only within Christian dogmatic philosophy. "Sin" has meaning and truth only in the realm of Christian faith and its grace. Thus that equation of sin with evil can mean either that Schelling secularizes the dogmatic theological concept of sin to a philosophical one or else that he, conversely, orients the whole question of evil fundamentally to Christian dogmatics. Neither of these two interpretations alone could get at the true situation because both are actually intermingled for Schelling, a secularization of the theological concept of sin and a Christianization of the metaphysical concept of evil.

This direction of thinking, however, characterizes not only Schelling's treatise on freedom, but his whole philosophy, and not only his, but that of all of German Idealism, especially that of Hegel. The historical situation ruling Western philosophy since the beginning of the modern period is to rule it until the end of this age and still further. Here it is not a matter of some "theological" inclinations of individual thinkers, nor a matter of Schelling and Hegel first being theologians, of Europe's history being and remaining determined by Christianity, even when it might have lost its power. And for this reason a post-Christian age is something essentially different from a pre-Christian one. And if one wants to call what is non-Christian pagan, then paganism and paganism are fundamentally different—if one wants to speak of paganism at all. For paganism is a Christian concept just like sin.

In philosophy we can no more go back to Greek philosophy by means of a leap than we can eliminate the advent of Christianity into Western history and thus into philosophy by means of a command. The only possibility is to transform history, that is, truly to bring about the hidden necessity of history into which
neither knowledge nor deed reach, and transformation truly brought about is the essence of the creative. For the great beginning of Western philosophy, too, did not come out of nothing. Rather, it became great because it had to overcome its greatest opposite, the mythical in general and the Asiatic in particular, that is, it had to bring it to the jointure of a truth of Being, and was able to do this.

Thus it is evidence of a lack of understanding of the question, and above all a quite unproductive reaction, if one discards Schelling’s treatise on freedom by saying that Schelling fell into a false theologizing here. It is certain that after the treatise on freedom, Schelling brings the positivity of Christianity more and more to bear, but this does not yet decide anything about the essence and the meaning of his metaphysical thinking because it is not yet at all grasped in this way, but remains incomprehensible.

With regard to Schelling’s equation of evil with sin we must say that sin is evil interpreted in a Christian way, so much so that in this interpretation the essence of evil comes more plainly to light in a quite definite direction. But evil is not only sin and only comprehensible as sin. Since our interpretation is intent upon the true fundamental metaphysical question of Being, we shall not question evil in the form of sin, but discuss it with regard to the essence and the truth of Being. Thus it is also indicated indirectly that the scope of ethics is not sufficient to comprehend evil. Rather, ethics and morality concern only a legislation with respect to behavior toward evil in the sense of its overcoming and a rejection or its trivialization.

This remark is important in order to estimate correctly in what regard our interpretation is one-sided, consciously one-sided in the direction of the main side of philosophy, the question of Being.

With the presentation of the essential origin of evil nothing has as yet been said about its reality in the form of man’s freedom. And nothing can as yet be said directly about it until it is understood how evil could erupt from creation as an unmistakably universal principle everywhere in conflict with the good. Reflections on this will be given in what we demarcate as the second main section.

II. The Universal Reality of Evil as the Possibility of Individuals

The condition of the possibility of evil is the separability of principles in a being, the separability of ground and existence. Separability means (1) the movability of the principles with regard to each other so that one can take the place of the other and (2) not mere detachability of the one from the other, but the reversal of their actual unity since they must always be in a unity of reciprocal relation. Such separability is, however, only present when a being freely stands above both principles, that is, in relation to both principles, where beings are spirit. But a spirit in which the will of the ground can separate itself in a selflike way from the will of the understanding is a created spirit.
Thus evil is possible only in creatures and it is only possible as spirit. The realm of created spirit is determined as history. There is history only when there is man existing. Only man is capable of evil. But this capability is not one of his qualities. Rather, capable of being in such a way constitutes the essence of human being.

In that he is the faculty of evil, man, the faculty for the one, is at the same time a faculty for the other. For otherwise he would not be a faculty at all. In the essence and meaning of inner possibility considered by itself, man "is" thus neither good nor evil, but he is in essence that being which can be the one as well as the other, too, in such a way that when he is the one he is also the other. But inasmuch as man is real, he must necessarily be the one or the other in the sense of the actual dominance of one over the other. As possibility he is in essence an undecided being. But essentially he cannot remain in indecisiveness, insofar as he is. But he must be if the Absolute is to exist, that is, to emerge from itself into revelation. But something can be revealed only in its opposite. The opposition of the principles must come to light, that is, the one must decide against the other one way or the other. Herein is contained the fact that the good can only be in creatures if evil is, and the other way around.

Thus, if after the characterization of the inner possibility of evil the question of its reality now arises, the latter can be understood only in its essential counter-relation to the good, in such a way that evil and good are understood as actual realities of a faculty, which is the faculty of good and evil. But this is the essence of human freedom. If this question appeared to recede into the background in the previous section, it now emerges in full relief. For evil is nothing by itself, but is always only as something historical, spiritual, as human decisiveness. This decisiveness as such must always at the same time be decision for and against. What a decision goes against is not removed by that decision, but precisely posited.

But decision is what it is only as emergence from indecisiveness. Inasmuch as he is really man, man cannot persevere in indecisiveness, he must get out of it. But on the other hand, how is he to emerge from indecisiveness since he is this indecisiveness in his nature?

As this kind of created being, how is he particularly to emerge from essential indecisiveness to the decisiveness of evil and be real as something evil?

How does evil, whose possibility was shown, become real? How does the elevation of the self-will of self-seeking above the universal will come about? How does it come about that man wants to be the Absolute itself? How is this transition from the possible to the real to be thought? Our question is now the nature of this transition, what it is, not yet why it is.

What belongs to this transition from the possible to the real? We can see right away that as long as we ask the question in such a general way, it is underdefined and not a correct question. Possibility and reality have long since been under-
stood as ways in which a being can be, as modalities of Being. But its being possible and being real differ according to the fundamental character of the being and the stage of Being in which it stands. The animal’s possibilities correspond to its reality and vice-versa. What is possible for the animal (and how it is possible in the animal) has a different character of possibility from the corresponding factor in man, since man and animal constitute different stages of the creature’s Being. Thus in order to bring the unattached question of the nature of realization of evil to its proper metaphysical realm, we would have to go far beyond the framework of Schelling’s treatise and systematically present the essential transformations of possibility and reality in the various regions of Being, all of this on the foundation of an adequate concept of Being in general. Then the fundamental question would arise whether what is familiar and treated as the modalities of Being corresponds to a sufficient interpretation of Being at all. We must renounce all of these considerations here.

Instead, let us consider in retrospect on what preceded only the following: Evil is spirit and thus only real as spirit. But spirit is the self-knowing unity of ground and existence. The possibility of evil is a possibility of spirit, thus the possibility of such a self-knowing unity. The possibility of a unification, the possibility of unifying in one way or another, is the possibility of behaving.* But behaving is a kind of being in which beings as themselves relate to something else in such a way that this other in its turn is revealed as a being. We shall call the possibility of behaving the faculty of something.

We can say that a piece of wood “has” the possibility of burning up. But how does it “have” this possibility? In any case not in the manner of a faculty. The wood itself can neither strive towards burning up nor can it bring the burning about. Burning can only be caused in the wood by something else. Wood has the quality of consumability, but it does not have the faculty of consumption.

In contrast, a faculty is a being able to relate itself to a possibility of itself. This possibility stands in a definite relation to behavior. Possibility is something which a faculty has at its disposal, not only generally, but as something in which the faculty finds itself when it brings itself about. The possibilities of faculty are not arbitrary for it, but they are also nothing compulsive. In order to be itself, however, a faculty must cling to its possibilities. Oriented in its attraction to these possibilities it must incline toward them. An inclination to its possibilities always belongs to a faculty. Inclination is a certain anticipatory aptitude for striving for what can be done.

The inclination, that is, various directions of being inclined, are the presup-

* Behaving, behavior, Verhalten. If the prevalent connotation of behaviorism is avoided, behavior with its root have is close enough to the German halten (hold) to be usable. The English prefix be-, like the German ver-, is an intensification of the root verb—TRANS.
positions for the possibility of the decision of a faculty. If it could not and did not have to decide for one inclination or the other, that is, for what it has a propensity to, decision would not be decision, but a mere explosion of an act out of emptiness into emptiness, pure chance, but never self-determination, that is, freedom.

Thus according to its nature, freedom must be a faculty. But to a faculty there belongs inclination. Human freedom is the faculty of good and evil. Where does the inclination to evil in man come from, man who originates from the Absolute as creature?

This question must be answered to make the transition comprehensible from the possibility of evil to its reality. The inclination to evil must precede the decision. The decision as such is always that of an individual man. This evil to which inclination is inclined in general can thus be neither evil which is already real nor the evil of an individual man.

It must be evil in general, in general, but not yet real, still also not nothing, but that which can be evil in general, fundamentally can and wants to become it and yet is not real. What is that?

In any case we already understand better why a section is inserted between Section I, The Possibility of Evil; and Section III, Reality and the Realization of Evil. This section must treat the general reality of evil as the possibility, that is, the making possible of individual and truly real evil.

At the same time we also see more clearly that “general reality” means here evil’s ubiquitous wanting to become real urging everywhere in creatures. Evil is only just about to become real, it is only just somehow effecting, effective, but it is not yet truly real as itself, it shows itself in another. If this other did not exist, no inclination toward it would be possible, and if there were no inclination there would be no faculty and if there were no faculty of . . . , there would be no freedom.

After this clarification of the question, the direction of an answer is now to be followed. As the reversal of human spirit, evil is the individual will gaining mastery over the universal will. Thus, what is ground and should always remain ground is, so to speak, made into an existent. As longing, the ground is a striving-for-itself which becomes the craving for separation in the creature. The will of the ground is everywhere what arouses self-will and drives it beyond itself. Wherever it shows itself, it is indeed not an evil itself which appears, but a prefiguration of evil. We find such prefigurations in nature: the strange and chance element of organic formations and deformations, what incites horror, the fact that everything alive is approaching dissolution. Here something appears which has been driven out into selfish exaggeration and is at the same time impotent and repulsive. But since it is not yet something spiritual, it can only be a prefiguration of evil as something selflike dominant in nature.

But in the realm of spirit, too, of history, evil does not emerge automatically. However, here it does not just offer a prefiguration as in nature, but announces
itself as the spirit of discord. It does this in a quite definite sequence of stages. Correspondingly as in nature the original unruly element develops into the separate and ever richer and higher manifold of forms.

"The same stages of creation which exist in the latter (the realm of nature) are also in the former (the realm of history); and the one is the symbol and explanation of the other" (pp. 54-55).

What follows from this for Schelling's procedure can easily be seen. Accordingly, the aim is to construct the stages of history, that is, the different ages of the world beginning with the primeval age when good and evil had not yet appeared as such, past the golden age of the world of which only the sagas still preserve a memory. From there the construction goes further past the Eastern to the Greek world, from there to the Roman and from there to the Christian age of the world (pp. 56-57). Since this historical construction is the common property of German Idealism, there is all the less reason to go into detail here. Already in the System of Transcendental Idealism, Schelling had begun with it, then especially in his Vorlesungen über das akademische Studium.

Because it is so rich and self-contained, the construction of the history of spirit in Hegel's first and greatest work, the Phenomenology of Spirit, is the most lofty. It presents and accomplishes nothing other than the appearance, that is, the emergence from itself to itself of the Absolute in the essential sequence of its essential forms. What corresponds to the essential historical meaning of evil in Schelling, but is not merely identical with it, is in Hegel what he calls the diremption of unhappy consciousness.

For us today these sketches of world history have something strange about them so that we do not find our way immediately with regard to their true intention and easily fall prey to misinterpretations. (At this opportunity let us give only one directive for the discussion of these constructions of history of German Idealism. So far, we have not yet gained the right fundamental relation to them because we measure them immediately and exclusively with the criteria of the positive and positivistic sciences of history. Their merits have their own place; their work is dispensable for present and future knowledge. But in those constructions it is not a matter of a supposedly arbitrary and inaccurate adjustment of so-called facts, but of the opening of essential, that is, possible, historical regions and their extension. To what extent the latter are occupied with "facts" and are occupied in the way presented in the context of the construction is another question. What is decisive is the creative wealth of the prefiguration of historical regions and landscapes, and all of this with the intention of grasping the essential law of Spirit. The most exact historical investigation is nothing if it is lacking these regions. But they also cannot be added afterwards."

What Schelling want to clarify in our case is the nature of the historical movement in which the spirit of evil makes itself known. The spirit of evil is provoked by the good in such a way that it drives itself against the good in its
revolt. But the good does not impart itself to evil as if there were pieces of itself which could then be changed into evil. It is not a matter of mutual communication and respective self-relinquishment and mingling, but “distribution” of the forces which are always already intrinsically separated and remain so. “Distribution” really means to allow that to emerge in which each, good and evil, actually participates.

For the characterization of the announcement of evil, of its actuality in which it still is not yet itself truly real, Schelling uses the term “the attraction of the ground.” As the tyranny of self-will over the whole, evil is generally grounded in the craving of the ground in that the ground strives within creatures to make itself the dominant principle instead of just remaining the ground. “Attraction” of the ground: the same thing is meant by this as when we say, at least still in dialect, the weather “takes a turn”; that is, it is getting cold, something is contracting in such a way that it comes to a head and in so doing delimits itself from other things and in this delimitation exposes itself and its opposite out of indecisiveness and thus allows itself to incline in definite directions. This “attraction of the ground” spreads dissension in preparation and since every being is determined by ground and existence, in man, however, their unity is a spiritual, capable one, the “attraction of the ground” in man becomes the preparation of an attraction of a faculty. The faculty contracts, stiffens, becomes tense, and the tension toward... still at rest is the inclination to evil.

But where does this attraction of the ground come from? In the attraction of the ground the ground is in a way left to itself in order to operate as ground. But this is only an essential consequence of the Absolute, for the ruling of love must let the will of the ground be, otherwise love would annihilate itself. Only by letting the ground operate does love have that in which and on which it reveals its omnipotence—in something in opposition. The inclination to evil as the general operation of evil thus “comes” from the Absolute.

We can easily clarify that in a simple sequence. Love is the primordial unification of that which could each be for itself, and yet is not and cannot be without the other. Thus, love lets the ground operate. But this operating is the attraction of the ground and thus the arousal of self-will in the creature and thus the awakening of the inclination to evil. Thus, love (God) is the cause of evil!

Yet that is a very premature conclusion, premature because—following a very stubborn habit of thought—it immediately loses sight of what is peculiar to these connections of Being prevalent here and proceeds with the statements as with counters. We must see the following:

The ground does not arouse evil itself. It also does not arouse to evil, it only arouses the possible principle to evil. The principle is the free mobility of ground and existence in opposition to each other, the possibility of their separation and therein the possibility of the revolt of self-will to dominate the universal will. The inclination to evil, that is, to the reversal of self-will, is grounded in the operation
of the attracting ground. In contradistinction to all "nature," the ground becomes the more powerful in man, the flight to self-craving becomes the more urgent because this craving is that through which the will of the ground striving for darkness wants to remove itself from the luminosity of the divine look of light. But in this look God looked at man, and in looking, elevated his essence to the light. However, as the purest essence of all will, this look is a consuming fire for every particular will. The sundered self-will of man is threatened by this fire. It threatens to extinguish all self-will and every being-a-self. The dread for its self, the "life dread" present in the ground of Being drives it to emerge from the center, that is, to cling to separation and further it, and thus to pursue its inclination.

Life-dread is a metaphysical necessity and has nothing to do with the little needs of the individual's intimidation and hesitancy. Life-dread is the presupposition of human greatness. Since the latter is not absolute, it needs presuppositions. What would a hero be who was not capable of letting precisely the most profound life-dread arise in himself? Either only a pure comedian or a blind strong-man and a brute. Dread of existence is not evil itself, it is also not the herald of evil, but the testimony that man is subject to this reality of evil, essentially so.

However, the inclination to evil is not a compulsion, but has its own necessity. This necessity does not prevent, but precisely requires, that the real realization of evil, that is, the reversal, contained in the will, of the unity of principles, is always man's free deed—in the individuation of his actual decisiveness.

III. The Process of the Individuation of Real Evil.

We already noted in recounting the individual sections and their titles that these titles only indicate the content of the sections externally. They are unable to convey anything of the movement of thinking in which alone the "content" is truly contained and is a content.

The previous section shows with regard to the first one that the possibility of evil, its being possible, is not only a formal possibility in the sense of that kind of possibility which we only characterize negatively and vacuously by saying and meaning that something "is" possible. That is supposed to mean that it does not contain a contradiction, in general there is nothing in its way. A golden mountain is possible, but this kind of possibility has no real being-possible in the sense that it inclines forward to the making possible of the possible and thus is already on the way to realization. Where evil is possible, it is also already operative in the sense of a thoroughgoing attraction of the ground in all beings. Accordingly, the true realization of evil is not the keeping of this reality away from a mere possibility of thought, but is a decision within an already present operation.

Freedom is the faculty of good and evil. Freedom in the sense of being truly free includes the fact that the faculty has become a liking, a liking in the sense that it likes only being good or only malice, it has decided for one in opposition to the
other. (Liking as inclination; liking as having decided for . . . , letting nothing disturb that.)

It is in the nature of the matter that just where the true reality of evil, that is, the actual decidedness in willing the reversal, there appears not just "one side" of freedom, but freedom in its full essence. If we read the title of the third section aloud, "The process of the individuation of real evil," it appears that only evil is being spoken about. But if we understand it in context and in terms of the direction of the whole movement of thought, we see that now precisely the full essence of human freedom must come into view in its complete clarity. Notwithstanding the guiding orientation toward evil, our reflection must now move to a higher level. It concerns the decision for evil and good as a decision. But the investigation thus again turns to the discussion, not pursued earlier, of the formal concept of freedom in the sense of self-determination. To speak more exactly, that earlier reflection on the formal concept of freedom—and that means the whole position of Idealism with regard to freedom—now moves into the context of the question of man's real freedom. We must now get the correct feeling for the factuality of the fact of human freedom which was tentatively discussed at the beginning of the treatise.

Thus the transitional passage from what we left out as Section II to the III section becomes clear in its intention (p. 59): "But just how the decision for good and evil comes to pass in individual man, that is still wrapped in total darkness and seems to require a special investigation. Up to the present we have, in any case, attended less closely to the formal side of freedom, although an insight into it seems to be connected with no less difficulty than the explanation of the concept of its reality."

We can get to understand what is essential in the III section in two ways:

1. By a more primordial version of the previous Idealistic concept of freedom on the foundation of what was now gained from the treatise.

2. By characterizing the determining ground for emerging from undecidedness to decision and decidedness.

But both ways coincide. For according to the Idealist concept, freedom is self-determination in terms of one's own law of being. But man's essence is to be created spirit; that is, that which God saw when he grasped the will to nature, and that means saw himself in the ground. Man "is" this look of light, in such a way that, according to his origin from creating-creature, selfish ground and existence are separable in man. Their unity must thus be in every real man as such in the decidedness of a definite union, in that union which constitutes the essence of just that man. But in accordance with man's essential origin from the look of life of the divine ground, this essence must be determined by eternity, and since it is the essence of man as an actual individual, determined in the eternal determination of itself to itself. Every man's own essence is each time his own eternal deed. Thence comes that uncanny and at the same time friendly feeling that we have always
been what we are, that we are nothing but the unveiling of things long since decided.

The consideration of the question which determining ground breaks undecidedness as an undecidedness of a faculty leads to the same result. Of course, if one takes undecidedness in a purely negative sense, according to which no possibilities at all are prefigured and oriented in the inclination of a path, and if one understands self-determination also only in a negative sense—according to which there is no determining ground at all, but pure arbitrariness—the essence of freedom dissolves into empty chance. The will remains without direction and origin; it is no longer a will at all. On the other hand, if one understands the determining ground for the decision as a cause which itself must again be the effect of a preceding cause, the decision is forced into a purely mechanical causal context and loses the character of decision. Pure arbitrariness does not give a determining ground for decision. Mechanical force does not give a determining ground for what it is supposed to, for decision.

The decision must be determined, thus necessary. But it cannot be necessary in the sense of a compulsorily linked series of continuing relations of cause and effect.

What kind of necessity is determinative in the decision of freedom, then? An essential insight already lies in this question to which we are now led: The insight that necessity belongs in any case to freedom itself, that freedom itself is necessity. But what kind of necessity?

Along with possibility and reality, necessity counts as one of the modalities of Being. We saw that the kind of modality, in this case the kind of necessity, is determined by the actual fundamental kind and stage of the being in question. Now it is a matter of man and the way of his being in his freedom. But freedom is the faculty of good and evil. A directedness to the realm of prefigured directions of inclination belongs to a faculty. But freedom is not one faculty among others; it is rather the faculty of all possible faculties. It essentially contains what characterizes every faculty. That is the fact that the faculty of ... reaches beyond itself, projects itself into what it is actually capable of. As the faculty of faculties, freedom is capable only when it positions its decision beforehand as decidedness in order for all enactment to become necessary in terms of it. True freedom in the sense of the most primordial self-determination is found only where a choice is no longer possible and no longer necessary. Whoever must first choose and wants to choose does not yet really know what he wants. He does not yet will primordially. Whoever is decided already knows it. The decision for decidedness and self-knowledge in the clarity of one's own knowledge are one and the same. This decidedness which no longer needs a choice because it is grounded in essential knowledge is far removed from all formalism, in fact it is its direct opposite. For formalism is sentimentality locked in prefabricated goals.
The necessity by which or as which freedom is determined is that of its own essence. But the determination of one’s own essence, that is, the most primordial free element in freedom, is that self-overreaching as self-grasping which originates in the original essence of human being. The most futural element of all decidedness of human being in its individuality is what is most past. If man is free and if freedom as the faculty of good and evil constitutes the essence of human being, the individual man can only be free when he has himself decided originally for the necessity of his essence. This decision was not made at some time, at a point of time in the series of time, but falls as a decision to temporality. Thus where temporality truly presences, in the Moment, where past and future come together in the present, where man’s complete essence flashes before him as this his own, man experiences the fact that he must always already have been who he is, as he who has determined himself for this. If one’s own existence is really experienced in the sense of human being and not misunderstood as objective presence, there is nothing compulsory in this fundamental experience of one’s own being, simply because a compulsion cannot be there, but rather necessity is freedom here and freedom is necessity.

Only a few, and they rarely, attain the deepest point of the highest expanse of self-knowledge in the decidedness of one’s own being. And when they do, only as “often” as this moment of the innermost essential look is a moment, that is, most intensified historicity. That means that decidedness does not contract one’s own being to an empty point of mere staring at one’s ego, but decidedness of one’s own being is only what it is as resoluteness. By this we mean standing within the openness of the truth of history, the perdurance (Inständigkeit) which carries out what it must carry out, unattainable and prior to all calculation and reckoning.

These moments alone are possible criteria for the determination of man’s essence, but never an idea of an average man, compiled from somewhere, in which everybody recognizes himself complacently without further ado—this “without further ado” to be taken quite exactly and literally. But in the Moment of the decisive fundamental experience of human being we are, as in no other experience of self, protected from the vanity of self-overestimation and the self-righteousness of self-depreciation. For in the decidedness of our own being, we experience the fact that no one attains the height of what is his best as little as he attains the abyss of what is his evil, but that he is placed in this Between in order to wrest his truth from it which is in itself necessary, but, precisely for this reason, historical. It stands beyond the distinction of a truth for everyone and a truth for “special individuals.” Only a wrested truth is truth. For it wrestles beings out into the open, and orders that open so that the bond of beings may come into play.

What is determinative for man’s freedom is the necessity of his own actual being. This necessity itself is the freedom of his own deed. Freedom is necessity; necessity is freedom. These two sentences, correctly understood, do not stand in
the formal mutual relation of an empty reversal. Rather, a process is contained there which goes back to itself, but in doing so never comes back to the same thing, but takes the point of departure back to a deeper understanding.

And only now that the reality of human freedom and real freedom have been characterized can we more or less formulate the essential delimitation already given. We said that human freedom is the faculty of good and evil. Perhaps we have not yet adequately noted that Schelling says the faculty of good and of evil, or we have at best only noted it to the extent that we are at bottom offended by this version as being imprecise. For it would really have to read of good or evil. No, as long as we think this we have not yet grasped the given essential interpretation of human freedom. For freedom as a real faculty, that is, a decided liking of the good, is in itself the positing of evil at the same time. What would something good be which had not posited evil and taken it upon itself in order to overcome and restrain it? What would something evil be which did not develop in itself the whole trenchancy of an adversary of the good?

Human freedom is not the decidedness for good or evil, but the decidedness for good and evil, or the decidedness for evil and good. This freedom alone brings man to the ground of his existence in such a way that lets him emerge at the same time in the unity of the will to essence and deformation of essence aroused in him. This aroused will is spirit, and as such spirit history.

Only now in terms of such an understanding of the “definition” do we have the correct point of departure to grasp the factuality of the fact of freedom, and that means at the same time to appropriate correctly what the next section presents.

IV. The Form of Evil Appearing in Man.

After all that we have said, two things must become clear: First, the form of evil is in itself the form of evil and good, and vice-versa. The apparently one-sided orientation toward the characterization of evil finds itself automatically placed in the essential relation of evil to good. Accordingly, the presentation of appearing evil becomes at the same time the presentation of appearing good. Second, the unity of both, the “and” does not mean an ethical, moral unity as if each time the other were only what should and should not be. Rather, appearing, emerging into beings as beings, evil in human being is at the same time an appearance of the good and vice-versa.

These two main points in the fourth section are to be further explained briefly. Regarding the first point, as something real, evil is a decidedness of freedom, the decidedness for the unity of ground and existence in which the selflike ground, self-craving puts itself in the place of the universal will. The decidedness for the dominance of such a reversal, however, must—like all will to dominate—continually transcend itself in order to maintain itself in dominance. Thus, in evil lies the hunger of self-craving which dissolves all bonds more and more in its greed to
be everything and dissolves into nothingness. Such a dominance of evil is nothing negative, not an incapability and a mere error. For this reason, it also not only arouses the mood of mere displeasure and regret, but also fills us with terror by virtue of its greatness which is, of course, reversed. Only what is spiritual is terrible. But what is reversed still rests in this longing as a reversal: longing, insofar as it has remained in harmony with existence. It is there in a remote memory, and thus the Absolute itself in its primordial unity, the good as itself. And even in the terror of evil an essential revelation occurs. For in its craving for self-consumption, the self-craving of malice mirrors that original ground in God, before all existence as it is for itself completely striving back into itself, and this is the terrible in God.

Correspondingly, the form of the good as a way of decidedness shows at the same time the appearance of evil, most of all just where the decidedness for the good reaches out so far in its decision that it decides from the Absolute itself for the Absolute as such. These highest forms of decision are enthusiasm, heroism, and faith. Their forms are manifold and cannot be presented here. But in every form of true decision the knowledge underlying it and radiating through it is always essential. For example, for heroism the following is characteristic: the clearest knowledge of the uniqueness of the existence taken upon oneself, the longest resolution to being the path of existence over its apex, the certainty which remains insensitive to its own greatness, and, lastly and firstly, the ability to be silent, never to say what the will truly knows and wants.

But all of this not as an easygoing urge just developing and fulfilling itself, but in the keenness of the knowledge of opposing forces, discord, and self-craving, of what tears down and turns everything around, from the knowledge of the essential presence of malice. The greater the forms of good and evil, the closer and more oppressive the counterform of evil and good.

From this brief reference to the co-presence of evil in good and good in evil, we can now see more clearly the truth of the dialectical sentence discussed in the introduction: The good “is” evil. It can also be turned around: Evil “is” the good; it helps to constitute the goodness of decidedness.

Regarding the second point, from this reciprocal relation between good and evil we take at the same time a reference as to how the “and” between both, their unity, and the reality of this unity, is to be conceived. In any case not as “morality,” for here the good is what ought to be and the bad is what ought not to be. Here good and evil are the aims of striving and repugnance. They are held apart by the directions of this striving, and only this being apart and away from each other remains in view. Thus precisely in the moral interpretation we forget that good and evil could not strive apart from each other if they were not intrinsically striving against each other and that they could never strive against each other if they did mutually thrust into each other and were not together in the ground as they are.
Good and evil are what is separated in unity by virtue of the unity of the highest decidedness in which there is no mere-striving and no only-choosing. It is that knowledge which is certain of its own essential necessity and acts as such. This certainty is the conscientiousness, to be understood metaphysically, not morally, which acts from the presence of the God, but at the same time does not behave at all as if deviltry, the countergod of malice, did not exist.

Conversely, the reversed unity as malice, too, is the self-consuming decidedness of a knowledge, not a mere lack of conscience. Lack of conscience is simply base, but not evil. Malice is reversed conscientiousness which acts from the unique presence of the self-craving ground in which all compassion and forbearance has been burnt out; we speak of hard-boiled malice. It is so knowing that it would especially never dream of taking the God merely as a nursery tale. Rather, it knows inside that every attack is incessantly directed at him.

With this fourth section, the direct essential presentation of the possibility and reality of evil is concluded. It becomes more and more evident that it is not a special treatment of evil as a quality separable for itself. Rather, the question of evil is the essential presentation, aiming at the very center, of human freedom itself. And finally still another decisive insight was gained. In each of its fundamental forms freedom is essentially a knowing, that knowing which is what truly wills in the will.

But the question of human freedom is, as we heard in the preface, the question of the system, of the jointure of beings as a whole. Thus the course of the treatise must take the direction of the question of the system now that the essence of freedom has been clarified in its essential respects.

What we isolated as the subsequent three sections points in this direction. It is true that in accordance with the treatise's basic intention to show human freedom as a center of the system, the system itself and the question of the system are only delineated in the broadest and roughest outlines. And that occurs at first by way of a continuation of the train of thought just completed. Only sections VI and VII treat the system explicitly. Section V constitutes the transition.

V. The Justification of God's Divinity in the Face of Evil

The title already indicates that evil will now be considered in relation to the Absolute and that the perspective now aims at the whole. But didn't this already happen in the previous sections? Was it not their essential intention to show how the ground in God, originally creating nature, grounded that operation of evil which thoroughly rules the whole realm of beings, created nature and the realm of history, and finally determined the principle for evil? Indeed. And only because the possibility and reality of evil as a decidedness of human freedom extend metaphysically to the Absolute and claim the whole of beings for themselves can human freedom raise a founded claim to the basic character of a center of the
system at all. It also follows from what has been said that as far as what concerns the question of freedom no essential enrichments are to be expected in the next sections, on the other hand that the content of these sections is more easily accessible mainly as essential conclusions from what preceded. It is not just due to the growing familiarity with the treatise that the following sections seem less strange to us. They are also stylistically more loosely constructed and move in their musical key back to the introduction. Of course, it would be a deception if we were to think that the questions treated with regard to the system had fewer presuppositions than those concerned with freedom. Still, we must ascertain that Schelling’s beginning impetus and keenness of metaphysical questioning diminish toward the end.

The content of the fifth section concerns the question how God as the Absolute is to be justified in the face of evil. How is it possible that he can remain and be God if He is the ground of evil? This question is the true and sole metaphysical question in relation to evil in the history of thinking. This question is, so to speak, the usual package in which the “problem of evil” is passed around. For Schelling it is only an interlude, because on the one hand evil is not simply just a fact by itself, but belongs to the good and because on the other hand the Absolute neither operates determinatively in the manner of a mechanical cause, nor is it mere understanding and intelligent will in its essence.

The answer to the question of the justification of the Absolute in the face of evil has already been given in what preceded. We only have to repeat what was said. The question is really no longer a question because the point of departure of the traditional question has been relinquished, and everything is based upon a more primordial interpretation of Being.

Creation and all creatures are God’s free act. Thus God is the originator of evil. If not, why did He not then keep creatures from being evil? If the Absolute is free and thus obviously free in the absolute sense, it must after all have infinite possibilities of choice, including that of not letting evil be at all. Schelling rejects this traditional and common consideration in two respects. He shows that (1) God does not have infinite possibilities of choice and cannot have them and (2) God cannot let evil not be.

Regarding (1): only a finite being which does not simultaneously dominate beings as a whole immediately and in every respect, only for this being does the possible exist, and the possible is therefore always relative, projecting in terms of a definite reality and for that reality. Here Schelling touches upon an essential question of metaphysics. We can clarify it as the question of the inner essential relation between possibility and finitude. The realm of the possible and the real exist only in what is finite, and if the distinguishability of possibility and reality belongs to the essence of Being, then Being in general is finite in essence. To choose means to relate oneself to possibilities and in doing so to prefer one to the others. Thus, to be able to choose means to have to be finite. Such a determination
is incompatible with the Absolute. On the contrary, the perfection of the Absolute consists in only being able to will one thing, and this one thing is the necessity of its own essence. And this essence is love. Thus the second sentence is already founded, too.

Regarding (2): God cannot let evil not be, He must admit evil. This admission is not immediate, but rather a mediate one so that the originator of evil only comes about in this mediation. God lets the oppositional will of the ground operate in order that that might be which love unifies and subordinates itself to for the glorification of the Absolute. The will of love stands above the will of the ground and this predominance, this eternal decidedness, the love for itself as the essence of Being in general, this decidedness is the innermost core of absolute freedom. On the basis of this absolute freedom, evil is metaphysically necessary. Thus evil could only not exist under one metaphysical condition, namely, if the Absolute itself did not have to be. But it must be if beings are at all. With this we enter the essential idea of the sixth section.

VI. Evil in the System as a Whole

If beings are at all, there must be creation. Creation is self-presentation emerging from itself in the ground. Creation presupposes the will to self-revelation (existence) and at the same time that in which it presents itself as in another. This other is the ground, the basis. Letting the ground operate is necessary in order that a creator be able to be a creature. Of course, the Absolute makes the ground independent of its self its own. The creature, on the other hand, never gains complete control over the ground. It shatters itself upon it and remains excluded from it and thus burdened by its gravity. Thus, the “veil of sadness which is spread over all nature, the deep, unappeasable melancholy of all life” (p. 79).

Thence all creators, creative people, the poets, thinkers, and founders of the state, are “melancholy spirits” according to Aristotle. What comes from the mere ground does not come from God. But evil is the insurrection of the ground’s craving, as the ground not to be one condition, but the sole condition. Because evil comes from the ground, the ground, however, belongs to the essence of beings, evil is posited in principle with the Being of beings. Where beings as a whole are projected in the jointure of Being, where system is thought, evil is included and implicated.

But what does system mean here? We said that system was the self-knowing unity of the jointure of Being. Thus the jointure of Being must become determinant for the whole of system. How is the distinction of ground and existence of beings related to the system? This question echoes in this section and the last one, but it is not seized upon and above all not yet penetrated at all in its inner difficulty.

At the passage of the transition to the VI section there is the sentence: “In the divine understanding there is a system; God himself, however, is not a system but
a life . . .” (pp. 78, 399). Here system is attributed to only one factor of the jointure of Being, to existence. At the same time, a higher unity is posited and designated as “life.” We are familiar with the metaphysical significance of this term. It never means for Schelling merely “biological,” plant-animal life. Schelling’s language is “polemical” here. In contrast to the Idealist version of the Absolute as intelligence, he means that the will of the understanding exists in opposition to the will of the ground. But when the system is only in the understanding, the ground and the whole opposition of ground and understanding are excluded from system as its other and system is no longer system with regard to beings as a whole.

That is the difficulty which emerges more and more clearly in Schelling’s later efforts with the whole of philosophy, the difficulty which proves to be an impasse (Scheitern). And this impasse is evident since the factors of the jointure of Being, ground and existence and their unity not only become less and less compatible, but are even driven so far apart that Schelling falls back into the rigidified tradition of Western thought without creatively transforming it. But what makes this failure so significant is that Schelling thus only brings out difficulties which were already posited in the beginning of Western philosophy, and because of the direction which this beginning took were posited by it as insurmountable. For us that means that a second beginning becomes necessary through the first, but is possible only in the complete transformation of the first beginning, never by just letting it stand.

At this stage of the treatise on freedom it is not yet clearly evident to Schelling that precisely positing the jointure of Being as the unity of ground and existence makes a jointure of Being as system impossible. Rather, Schelling believes that the question of the system, that is, the unity of beings as a whole, would be saved if only the unity of what truly unifies, that of the Absolute, were correctly formulated. That is the task of the last section.

VII. The Highest Unity of Beings as a Whole and Human Freedom

The highest unity is that of the Absolute. But since the latter exists as eternal becoming, the Being of this becoming must be understood in such a way that the primordial unity is present as that which lets everything originate. Thus, this unity also lies still before the duality of ground and existence. In such a unity, no duality can be discernible yet. Thus, this unity is also no longer the unity of what belongs together (identity), but what belongs together is itself supposed to arise from this primordial unity. This unity is “absolute indifference.” The only predicate which can be attributed to it is lack of predicates. Absolute indifference is nothingness in the sense that every statement about Being is nothing with regard to it, but not in the sense that the Absolute is nugatory and merely of no use. Here, too, Schelling does not see the necessity of an essential step. If Being in
truth cannot be predicated of the Absolute, that means that the essence of all Being is finitude and only what exists finitely has the privilege and the pain of standing in Being as such and experiencing what is true as beings.

However, just this last section is important for the basic sections I-IV. It warns us in retrospect never to think becoming in the essential project of the movement of becoming of the Absolute in such a way that initially there is only a ground and then existence accrues to it from somewhere. Rather, both are in their own way the whole, but they are not simply simultaneous in the Absolute. Their duality erupts directly from the neither-nor of absolute indifference. This primordial duality becomes an opposition only when the will of love enters the decided-ness of being absolutely superior and lets the ground be ground. If opposition is not at all primordially “there” by itself in the Absolute, then the opposition of good and evil is certainly not there which first comes about when the creator drives himself out into the selfhood of created spirit, and human freedom is realized.

But according to Schelling’s formulation of the concept of freedom, human freedom is the center of philosophy because from it as the center the whole movement of creatures’ becoming as the creator’s becoming and as eternal becoming of the Absolute becomes visible in a unified way in its opposition, its strife. According to the ancient saying of Heraclitus, strife is the basic law and basic power of Being. But the greatest strife is love because it arouses the deepest discord in order to be itself in conquering it.

The true weight of Schelling’s treatise in its content and form lies in the introduction and the first four sections. The introduction develops the question of system; the four sections work out a basic position of philosophy. But however far Schelling travels on a new path into the essence of human freedom, Kant’s basic position in the question of freedom is not undermined, but only confirmed. Kant says that the fact of freedom is incomprehensible. The only thing that we comprehend is its incomprehensibility. And freedom’s incomprehensibility consists in the fact that it resists comprehension since it is because freedom transposes us into the occurrence of Being, not in the mere representation of it. But the occurrence is not a blind unfolding of a process, but is knowing perdurance in beings as a whole, which are to be endured. This knowledge of freedom is certain of its highest necessity because it alone makes that position of receptivity possible in which man stands, and is able as a historical being to encounter a destiny, to take it upon himself and to transcend it.

The treatise on the essence of human freedom only speaks explicitly of man in a few passages. We do not find a self-contained analysis of human being at all. Rather the subject matter is the Absolute, creation, nature, the essential factors of Being, pantheism, and Idealism. And yet all of this speaks only of man, and the highest determinations are gained from an analogy to man. For this reason we
were constantly pursued by that reservation which can be called "anthropomorphic." The objection that this treatise determines the Absolute, creating, nature, even Being in general, in terms of the form of man is so apt and convincing that one subsequently lets this treatise alone as a genial game of thought which, however, is unproductive for "objective" cognition, and is only seductive.

What about this reservation? We cannot take it seriously enough since it more or less concerns all such investigations in a veiled way. To be sure, we can only give a few references here at the end which might serve as a stimulus for independent reflection.

The most important thing in any position with regard to the "anthropomorphic" objection is to concede from the outset what it generally marshals, that everything is gauged according to the form of man.

But after this confession the questions just begin. The "anthropomorphic" objection immediately exposes itself to the most pointed counterobjections by being content with this ascertainment. Behind it stands the conviction which it doesn't explain further that everyone, of course, generally knows what man is.

But what is insidious about anthropomorphism is not that it gauges according to the form of man, but that it thinks this criterion is self-evident and believes its closer determination and formulation to be superfluous. However, the objection to anthropomorphism does this, too, with the sole difference that it rejects this criterion. But neither the proponents of regular anthropomorphism nor its opponents ask the decisive question of whether this criterion is not necessary and why it is so. If the consideration ever gets this far, then one sees that essential questions lie behind the argument, whether anthropomorphism or not, and they belong to a quite different level.

We shall name some of them.

1. Can human thinking and knowing ever proceed any other way at all than in a continual relation to human existence?
2. Does a humanizing of everything cognizable and knowable follow without further ado from the fact that man remains the "criterion" in this sense?
3. Does it not rather follow primarily that before everything the question must be asked who is man?
4. Does not every essential determination of man overreach him—as the question alone who he is already shows—as certainly as every knowledge of the Absolute falls short of it?
5. Does not one thing follow compellingly, that the perspective for the essential determination of man is neither man alone in the way that everybody is familiar with him nor the non-human either, but just as little the Absolute with whom one believes oneself in immediate agreement?
6. Does man not exist in such a way that the more primordially he is himself, he is precisely not only and not primarily himself?
7. If man, as the being who is not only itself, becomes the criterion, then what does humanizing mean? Does it not mean the precise opposite of what the objection takes it for?

But if this is true, we shall have to decide to read all great philosophy, and Schelling's treatise in particular, with different eyes.

Even if Schelling did not think through the "anthropomorphical" reservation in this fundamental way and did not see the realm of tasks behind it, one thing still becomes quite clear. The fact of human freedom has for him its own factuality. Man is not an object of observation placed before us which we then drape with little everyday feelings. Rather, man is experienced in the insight into the absysses and heights of Being, in regard to the terrible element of the godhead, the lifedread of all creatures, the sadness of all created creators, the malice of evil and the will of love.

God is not debased to the level of man, but on the contrary, man is experienced in what drives him beyond himself in terms of those necessities by which he is established as that other. The "normal man" of all ages will never recognize what it is to be that other because it means to him the absolute disruption of existence. Man—that other—he alone must be the one through whom the God can reveal himself at all, if he reveals himself.

There is throughout Schelling's treatise something of the fundamental mood of Hölderlin of whom we spoke at an earlier occasion (winter semester 1934/35 and summer semester 1935).

"For because
The most blessed feel nothing themselves,
Another, if to say such a thing
Is permitted, must, I suppose,
In the gods' name, sympathetically feel,
They need him."